



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
May 29 – June 5, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Indigenous stories too often shut out of media

Canadian policy-makers and journalists need to find new ways to speak about native communities — and to empower them to speak for themselves.

By: Danny Glenwright Published on Sat May 30 2015

I recently entered the offices of the Lac Seul Band Council in Northern Ontario to find Chief Clifford Bull and several of his councillors sitting in the dark, engrossed in a story from the Walk-A-Mile Film Project that was playing on a screen in the corner of the room.

The documentary series, which, among other things, illustrates how failing to educate Canadian youth about Indigenous history perpetuates harmful stereotypes, aims to create a discussion on race relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

It's the type of dialogue that's sorely needed — and one that's been missing from many sectors in this country for too long. This extends to the media, which is why [Journalists for Human Rights](#) (JHR) has been working with Bull and his Band Council to establish media literacy and communications training for members of their community.

These efforts are part of our larger campaign to address a gap in coverage of Indigenous issues that has exacerbated racial tensions in Canada. [A 2013 study](#) by JHR showed that between 2010 and 2013, a cumulative average of just 0.28 per cent of all news stories produced by online and print media in Ontario contained content about Indigenous peoples. Duncan McCue, a CBC journalist who is Anishinabe, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, has written an extensive resource for journalists who report on Indigenous issues. As McCue has pointed out, there are currently a few surefire ways for Indigenous people to make the news: be a warrior, be dancing, be drumming, be drunk or be dead. We need to do better.

Yet what little coverage exists — of, say, how to address the growing number of missing and murdered Indigenous women or debates around resource extraction and pipelines — is often met with a collective yawn. This puzzling reality reminds me of my days as the editor of a news service in Southern Africa. Editors often told me that media consumers had AIDS fatigue — they were tired of hearing about the disease, and stories about HIV and AIDS no longer sold papers. Then a study that I co-authored, of more than 30,000

news items in 14 countries in the region, found that just 2 per cent of all stories monitored were about HIV and AIDS.

The challenge in both settings seems to be in providing fresh angles and perspectives to stories about entrenched inequalities. That's why JHR is providing curious citizens of Lac Seul and the surrounding areas with the tools they need to get their stories out in ways that will get attention: how to perfect the sound bite, finesse a press release, participate in an on-air interview, compose a compelling Tweet, or pen an op-ed such as this. JHR media trainers from across Canada recently headed to remote Ontario reserves to spend eight months teaching community members how to integrate more coverage of social issues into their local community radio programming — and how to share these stories with media in the rest of the country.

Much depends upon Indigenous stories being heard. Getting a sense of how different communities grapple with racism, exclusion and distrust is imperative to shaping policy around an issue that Ruth Shead, co-ordinator for the Indigenous Achievement department at the University of Manitoba, compares to addressing climate change. “There are so many pieces and you're counting on everyone to do their part,” she says. The Idle No More movement revived some of these issues and exposed many Canadians to them for the first time.

The Indigenous population in Canada is growing — and Canadian policy-makers (and journalists) need to find new ways to speak about these communities — and to empower them to speak for themselves. They must begin to look at how this growth can be an opportunity for Canada, rather than an obstacle. This includes focusing on some of the many solutions average Canadians have been creating to address social discrepancies.

JHR's initiative with Chief Bull and his community in Northern Ontario is just one means of doing this. I hope to hear from more Canadians in the media over the coming weeks about how they are creating similar spaces to tell their stories, confront stereotypes and challenge our country's history of apathy and intolerance toward Indigenous people.

Danny Glenwright is the Executive Director of Journalists for Human Rights.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/05/30/indigenous-stories-too-often-shut-out-of-media.html>

MacPherson: Cree singing rivals Highland pipes for loudness

By Les MacPherson, The Starphoenix June 2, 2015



Piping and Cree singing are musically related, Les MacPherson says.

People of Scottish descent might hate me for this, and people of Cree descent, too, but it seems to me that the bagpipes have more than a little in common with traditional Cree singing.

We got a tasty sample of both last week at the YWCA's annual Women of Distinction awards dinner. The nominees were piped in like royalty by a splendid pair of pipers, Don Macpherson and his granddaughter, Emma Woodtke. They then were welcomed with a stirring Cree honour song from Desai Walkingbear and his five-year-old son Dayson, whose voice reached every corner of the banquet room. The traditions of both Highland piping and Cree singing appear secure for another generation, at least.

It occurred to me after hearing these culturally disparate performances, one born in the Scottish highlands, the other a product of the North American prairies, that piping and Cree singing are musically related. They both resonate with the same primordial part of the human soul.

For starters, they both are loud. I can think of no other form of traditional music that would not be drowned out by piping or by Plains Cree singing. Maybe that's why pipers and Cree singers don't often perform with other instruments, except for the drums. No one could hear other instruments, except for the drums.

Determining which of these two forms is louder would only bend the needle on a sound-level meter. They have to be loud to be heard outdoors, the natural venue for both musical forms. No one would confuse Cree singing with piping, but they both have attitude, for lack of a better term. They both cry out, far and wide, even unto the heavens above: "Here we are, and what are you going to do about it?" To be so loud, these cultures had to be masters of their domain.

The timorous do not call attention to themselves like that. Not coincidentally, Highland Scots and Plains Cree both were martial cultures, with skill in warfare among the highest virtues.

Besides volume, Highland pipes and Cree singing also share a weird, otherworldly quality. Both are conventionally rhythmic, a point of entry almost anyone can find. Once drawn in, however, you are transported to a parallel universe where almost anything is possible. When the music ends, in the moment of extraordinary silence that ensues, you are almost surprised to find yourself back on Earth, right where you were when it started. The only thing that begins to approach it in popular music is what Jack Black described in School of Rock as the face-melting guitar solo.

To those not born to it, these musical forms are an acquired taste. The Cree, for instance, were unimpressed the first time they heard bagpipes. Peter C. Newman, in one of his Canadian histories, tells of a Hudson's Bay executive who toured the company's trading posts with his personal piper. A resident Cree who saw the piper piping later tried describing it to his chief. The performer was a man dressed as a woman, he explained, who held under one arm a live swan festooned with ribbons. By squeezing the swan with his arm, biting its head and pinching its neck, he caused it to make a horrible noise.

The piper, if he heard Cree singing, probably would have been just as complimentary. I didn't much care for it either, the first few times I heard it. Now, I find it thrilling, at least in small doses. I am never going to put traditional Cree singing or Highland pipes and drums on the music player when I get home from work, but for special occasions, they are perfect. It is a measure of esteem for these ancient cultures that their musical traditions now are associated with honour, celebration and community. I can find no record, incidentally, of a pipe band actually playing with traditional Cree singers. Maybe we're not ready for that.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/MacPherson+Cree+singing+rivals+Highland+pipes+loudness/11101425/story.html>

Global Nunavut art sales shrinking despite GN funding

Gallery closures, aging collectors, contribute to declining sales

DAVID MURPHY, June 04, 2015 – 6:00 am



How We Dress by Shuvinai Ashoona: a new study on arts and crafts in Nunavut says new collectors of Inuit art are younger and looking for more contemporary pieces such as this print, which shows two women, one in an amauti and one in a burka. (FILE PHOTO)

Nunavut's arts and crafts sector is "at a crossroads" and "failure to adapt to changing conditions will likely lead to further critical sales declines."

That's the clear message from a report called "Review of Sanaugait: A Strategy for Growth in Nunavut's Arts and Crafts Sector," tabled at Nunavut's legislative Assembly June 1.

The report is critical of the Government of Nunavut's 2007 Sanaugait strategy which is supposed to help guide the arts and crafts sector to prosperity.

In fact, wholesale Inuit art sales from 2009 to 2013 declined by 34 per cent, the report said.

The report, carried out by consulting firms Nordicity and Uqsiq Communications Inc., slams Sanaugait, a program launched by the GN's economic development and transportation department in 2007 to grow the arts sector.

Sanaugait was supposed to help the sector "contribute at least \$50 million annually to the territorial economy."

But it's fallen well short of that goal.

In 2013, the arts and crafts sector generated \$30.3 million — a nine per cent decrease from 2009, when it contributed \$33.4 million towards Nunavut's economy.

So what's going on? The report blames a global downturn in art sales.

Between 2007 and 2009, for example, global art sales fell by 41 per cent, itself a result of the 2008 financial crisis.

But in 2013, global art sales seemed to bounce back. Art sales in the United States, for example, enjoyed a 25 per cent spike that year.

In Nunavut, no such luck.

In fact, 16 Inuit art galleries have closed since 2012 according to the report. But these closures are just one factor contributing to a 34-per cent decline in wholesale Inuit art sales from 2009 to 2013, the report said.

Increasing trade restrictions on animal products, declining sales for carvings in remaining galleries and an upturn in direct sales through social media sites also contributed to the decline in the wholesale market.

Another factor to consider: there's more second-hand art on the market now.

Most Inuit art collectors are over 60, the report says, and many are downsizing their homes and selling off their art collections.

"The increased supply has reportedly contributed to a decline in auction prices, which may impact prices in the primary market," the report said.

The arts and crafts industry faces the same challenges as before the launch of Sanaugait, and some new challenges too.

"The Review's conclusion regarding the effectiveness of the Sanaugait is not entirely positive," the report said.

"While individual artworks may still be of quality, the external arts and crafts landscape has changed, necessitating new innovations and improvements in all facets of the sector from art production to sales, distribution and marketing in order to attract new buyers," the report said.

The report makes many recommendations — for larger grants, for the department of economic development and transportation to improve communication and staff training for economic development officers, and for the development of an Arts Council.

From 2009 to 2013, the GN's economic development and transportation department supported the arts and crafts sector to the tune of \$2.4 million; \$1.23 million was earmarked for the Arts and Crafts Development Program.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674global_nunavut_art_sales_shrinking_despite_gn_funding/

Indigenous TV that 'lifts the veil' on National Aboriginal History Month

Your guide to CBC's 'Absolutely Aboriginal'

By Jordan Wheeler, [for CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 03, 2015 10:52 PM ET Last Updated: Jun 03, 2015 11:39 PM ET



Natar Ungalaaq in a scene from the 2001 movie *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* by Inuk filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk. (The Canadian Press)

CBC celebrates National Aboriginal History Month with a month of special TV programming that celebrates arts, culture, history and stories from indigenous communities across Canada.

So apparently June has been National Aboriginal History Month since 2009. Good to know. It's a chance to reflect on indigenous history — seven generations is how far we're told to look back, and ahead as well, but as of yet we have no Aboriginal Future Month.

Here are some choices in CBC programming that will help lift the veil that has often shrouded indigenous history, a veil that too often has felt like an iron curtain.

First, a caveat — my writing background is fiction and drama so I may have a bias in that direction. And given that we're talking history, I looked towards projects that offered that context.

The content of some of the choices will be hard to watch, which I think is good. I prefer thought provoking motion picture that challenges an audience rather than coddling them.

Each choice offers some hard truths and tough information that will need to be reconciled. Truth and reconciliation is likely the reason the existence of National Aboriginal History Month has bubbled to the surface at all.

So sit back, grab a box of tissue and reconcile these:

[1. Atanarjuat](#)

This 2001 Zacharias Kunuk feature film is at the top of some best Canadian feature film lists. Visually stunning, historically accurate, shot entirely in the Arctic and in Inuktitut (it's subtitled in English for those of us not up on our Inuktitut) with Inuit actors and an Inuit writer and director, the project is a template for how to dramatize indigenous history in the proper way.

What I like best about this film, aside from the story, is that it's set a very long time ago, meaning there are no characters of European descent. It's a beacon against the notion that indigenous history begins with the arrival of the Europeans.

It airs at 11 p.m. Saturday, June 20

[2. Doc Zone: 8th Fire](#)

8th Fire is an in-depth four-part documentary series that examines the evolution of the relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples and their communities. And it doesn't hold back.



Wab Kinew hosts the doc series 8th Fire. (CBC)

In a way it is Truth and Reconciliation 1.0. Watch all four episodes and you will come away with a deeper understanding of Indigenous Peoples, no matter how much you thought you knew beforehand. In terms of providing a historical context and becoming a strong teaching tool, *8th Fire* has raised the bar.

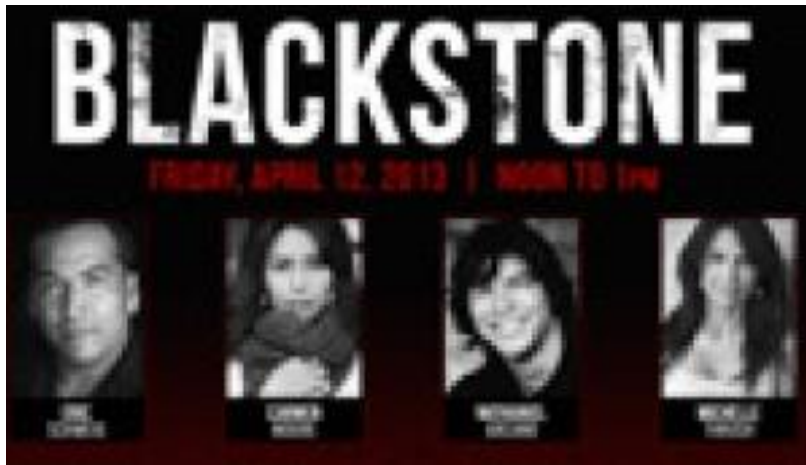
Wab Kinew hosts and he has that Peter Mansbridge element — when he talks you believe him.

It airs at 2 p.m., Sundays, June 21 and 28

3. Blackstone

This drama series is one of those controversial projects that appear from time to time that polarizes the indigenous audience. On one hand some lament, 'do we really need to show this kind of stuff on television?' But that gets countered with the sentiment 'man, I'm glad we have something like this on television.'

The former tends to be the view of the older demographic; the latter the younger.



Blackstone is edgy and contemporary indigenous drama.

Blackstone is a half hour drama that strives to be edgy and it manages to get there as it explores community dysfunction on several levels. It gives us a portrait of the result of cultural genocide that is all too common.

The number of F-bombs is a distraction and you'll need some Gravol to get through season one, but the camera moves settle down in later seasons. In dramatic terms it's worth the tree, evident by the number of awards it keeps piling up.

It kicks off at 11 p.m., Monday, June 15

4. Trick or Treaty

This is the latest addition to the body of work that is the career of maestro Alanis Obomsawin. You can feel hope and change surge through you as you watch this feature length documentary.



Alanis Obomsawin has made 40 documentaries for the National Film Board since 1971. (CBC News)

Perhaps too languid for some, *Trick or Treaty* gives us that classic, NFB style that Obomsawin has mastered. The visuals and sound bites merge seamlessly, and though it is not the best work in a career that began in the late 60s, I give this one a nod because of that body of work.

It's Alanis Obomsawin — watch all of her films and you'll know indigenous history and its relationship with Canada.

It airs at 7 p.m., Saturday, June 20

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/indigenous-tv-that-lifts-the-veil-on-national-aboriginal-history-month-1.3099274>

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Partnerships struck at Aboriginal Business Match gathering

By Scott Larson, The StarPhoenix June 2, 2015

Finding the right businesses and entrepreneurs to partner with is always a challenge for any firm.

That's why Paul Biglin is attending the Aboriginal Business Match (ABM) Prairies event being held in Saskatoon.

The ABM, back for its second year in Saskatoon, connects aboriginal decision-makers from across Saskatchewan and Manitoba with aboriginal and non-aboriginal companies and creates partnerships that include training, employment, investment and joint ventures.

“We are planting seeds,” said Biglin, co-owner of Spirit Bear Coffee Company. “We are working with people who have capacity (to make decisions) and the quality of the people here is unmatched.”

Spirit Bear started nine years ago roasting coffee in St. Albert, Alta., before moving its headquarters to Vancouver.

“We started from Visa cards and loans from friends,” Biglin said, adding Spirit Bear coffee is sold in more than 400 locations and the company is looking to grow further.

“We do everything from camp services to coffee houses.”

He said the ABM lets him meet up to 30 potential partners in the space of a couple of days.

“We find we will get to the critical buyers, we will get to the decision-makers here,” he said. “You can look at every facet of your business and find some fit.”

The Saskatoon event is co-hosted by the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF).

Monica Brunet, director of the Metis economic development sector with the CCDF, said more than 200 people registered for the conference.

The delegates choose one-on-one meetings through the selection of potential business matches using profile information before the conference starts.

“You could have (up to) 30 appointments over the two days,” Brunet said. “You have 20-minute meeting times that gives you the opportunity to talk about the goods and services you provide and see if there is something that could match.”

“It is amazing how much can be accomplished in those 20 minutes,” she said.

Participants include industry, aboriginal communities and aboriginal entrepreneurs.

Brian Winter, territory manager for McDougall Energy, an Esso branded reseller, said this is the first time coming to Saskatoon after finding successful partnerships at ABM events in B.C.

Winter, who had set up two dozen meetings over the two days, said 10 per cent of their business in B.C. is with First Nations and half of that has come through attending ABMs.

“Now we are moving east out of British Columbia,” he said.

The energy company manages a dealer-operated service station network and is looking to expand into Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Winter said the first meetings on Tuesday morning had already made the trip a success.

“My very first meeting I have a handshake agreement and we are very excited,” he said. “I would deem one deal to be a huge success and I think I got it with my first meeting.”

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Partnerships+struck+Aboriginal+Business+Match+gathering/11103591/story.html>

Aboriginal Community Development

Sipekne'katik First Nation implementing dog population control program

Reserve plans to spay, neuter and find new homes for roaming dogs

By Elizabeth Chiu, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 30, 2015 3:55 PM AT Last Updated: May 30, 2015 3:55 PM AT



Indian Brook resident Brittany Parker worries about her 3-year-old son playing outside because of roaming dogs. (CBC)

In Indian Brook, stray dogs that roam, sometimes in packs, are a familiar sight around the Sipekne'katik First Nation.

For residents like Brittany Parker, a mother of two small children, they trigger a deep fear.

"I worry all the time [about] my kids getting attacked by a dog," she said while playing with her three-year-old son on their front lawn.

It stems from an encounter last summer. Parker says she'd gone outside to feed her pet Rottweiler when an aggressive dog came out of nowhere.

"He growled, it was showing its teeth and it just lunged at me. I just couldn't get him off. I threw things at him, I went out with a bat. Nothing. I didn't want to get too close either," she said.



These are some of the dogs roaming the Sipekne'katik First Nation. (CBC)

"I don't want to get bit either. It was really scary."

After 20 minutes, the stray left and no one was hurt.

However, incidents like that have given rise to a name for the dogs.

"Everybody hears about res dogs," said Rufus Copage, chief of the Sipekne'katik First Nation.

He says there are lots of dogs like this that run loose and that's the name they've been given.

'We do have to have control of our dogs'

The chief and band council have recently approved a budget of \$57,000 to roll out a dog-control program this summer, a first for an aboriginal community in Nova Scotia.

"The last thing I want to do to see is some child getting mangled. We don't have a ton of money, but we do have to have control of our dogs," said Copage.

He believes the program will be the first one on a First Nation reserve in this province.

Marley's Hope, a dog rescue organization based in Chezzetcook, will coordinate the program. Residents will be offered free spay or neutering and vaccinations for their pets, worth \$400 to \$500. The animals will also be microchipped, so if they're found wandering, their owners could be fined under a proposed bylaw.

Darlene Grady-Lunn runs Marley's Hope. She says she's looked at the experiences of other First Nations reserves around the country and says her program will involve humane trapping. The strays will then be fostered and adopted out.

Grady-Lunn said no dogs will be euthanized unless a veterinarian says they're suffering from severe medical problems.

The program is expected to roll out in July. It can't happen soon enough for Copage.

"The dogs that are leaving the community are unwanted dogs, so it'll be nice to see somebody actually want these dogs," he said.

Brittany Parker says she'll take advantage of the free neutering for her pet.

"A lot of people can't afford vets either, right. I mean, they're expensive. So, I think it's a good idea," she said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/sipekne-katik-first-nation-implementing-dog-population-control-program-1.3094215>

Greenpeace crashed the seal-product market, and Inuit livelihood along with it

[Jake Flanagan](#)

June 03, 2015

The week of May 20, a delegation of native Greenlanders [descended on the European Parliament](#) in Strasbourg, France, advocating for the repeal of a 2009 ban on the import of commercially harvested seal products to Europe.

Since the ban—inspired by the efforts of animal-rights advocacy organizations like Greenpeace—seal pelt exports have dropped 90%. And despite a written exemption for indigenous Inuit hunters, markets across the Arctic, both large-scale commercial and sustainable-use, have crashed, with disastrous effect for Greenland and northern Canada's coastal Inuit communities.

"You get European tourists up in the Arctic who don't understand the legislation," Aaju Peter tells Quartz. Peter is a Greenland-born Inuk (Inuk is the singular form of Inuit) and lawyer who runs a home-based, sealskin garment business out of Toronto. She also advocates for Inuit rights to seal-product commerce and issues related to Arctic waters. "What people don't understand is that Europeans can buy for their own use," she explains. "But that doesn't really matter, because European fashion designers and the rest of the world have stopped using sealskins. The ban crashed the market."

The remoteness of Inuit lands only exacerbates misunderstanding. “The world doesn’t understand our geography,” she says. “Ten months of the year, it’s all snow and ice. We can’t grow or raise anything.”

Peter recalls the days before the ban fondly: “When the sealskin was legal and the price was high, the hunters could afford to buy gas and ammunition,” she tells Quartz. Hunters had a product to sell (pelts) that doubled as a means of feeding the family—there is as much iron in a palm-sized portion of seal meat as there is in 56 sausages, [Peter told Rabble](#).

“When they become pests for Europeans, they can just kill seals any which way they want.” Aside from decimating the traditional Inuit economy, Europe’s ban has had a terrible effect on regional marine ecology. “The seal population has grown astronomical,” Peter says. “The numbers, conservatively, are between seven and ten million for harp seals.” As evidence, she notes she was recently invited to a meeting with Danish fishermen currently locked in a fierce competition with the bloated seal population. “The seals are consuming 10 million tons of fish a year,” she says.

Europe has attempted to address seal overpopulation, but their methods have only incensed Peter and her fellow advocates further. “In European states, at the same time as they banned the import of commercially hunted seal products, the member states themselves applied for licenses to cull the number of seals!” she says. “The Europeans can understand [seal hunting] when it starts affecting their own needs of livelihood, for instance their fish stock. They totally ignore it when it is far away in Canada.”

It’s a frustrating hypocrisy—particularly since culls aren’t always carried out in humane ways. Meanwhile, the Inuit have been humanely dispatching seals for centuries. Europeans contracted for culls don’t know how to do it right, Peter says. “When they become pests for Europeans, they can just kill seals any which way they want.”

The European ban on seal products can be traced back to a 1970s campaign carried out by Greenpeace, the international environmentalist and animal-rights advocacy group. Greenpeace disseminated gory photographs of commercial seal hunts in the Canadian arctic to stir outrage—warranted in instances of inhumane dispatching and over-hunting, but not Inuit practices.

Bob Hunter, a co-founder of Greenpeace who spearheaded its anti-seal hunting and anti-whaling campaigns, claimed the organization’s leadership carefully considered the social and economic impacts of its actions, writes Stephen Dale in his 1996 book, *McLuhan’s Children: The Greenpeace Message and the Media*. But “this was definitely not true of the organization’s supporters,” he noted. “Urban environmentalists—both supporters and some of the leadership—made their decision about the Inuit seal hunt without any knowledge of the Inuit way of life, presumably on the basis of television reports on sealing.”

Famed Inuit leader [John Amagoalik](#), told Dale, “We were having a large meeting in one of our communities, and we invited a spokesman from the Greenpeace organization. One particular Inuk asked the Greenpeacer, ‘If we can’t hunt seals, what are we going to do? How are we going to feed our families?’ And the guy from Greenpeace suggested we should all build greenhouses and grow vegetables. I mean, this was a real insult to our people.”

And yet, much of the organizational philosophies of Greenpeace and similar outfits seem to derive from fetishized understandings of indigenous traditions. It’s “founding myth” recalls a highly generalized Native American legend; appropriative much in the same way your Urban Outfitters designer favors Navajo prints and faux-Hopi ceramic housewares.

“We don’t have the funds, we don’t have enough people to undo the problems caused by others.” Greenpeace misunderstands the diverse nature of relationship between various indigenous nations and the ecosystems they have inhabited for centuries. It renders them monolithic and, adding injury to insult, imposes that ill-conceived monolith back onto indigenous communities with little regard for its economic and environmental costs.

This is what happened in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. With a few, grainy, black-and-white photographs, Greenpeace nearly annihilated the Inuit way of life. And, for Aaju Peter, the magnitude of damage inflicted isn’t something that can be repaired with mere words.

She refers back to [an op-ed](#) written by Greenpeace Canada’s Joanna Kerr in The Nunatsiaq News, published in June 2014. Between environmentalists, it is generally understood to be an acknowledgement of Greenpeace’s role in crashing the Arctic’s seal-product trade. For Inuit advocates, like Peter and Redfern, it is simply too little, too late.

“It’s a good thing they apologized,” Peter admits. “But that is not good enough. We need compensation.”

“I don’t know what form it would take,” she replies when asked if she or other Inuit groups would appeal for formal reparations at some point in the future. “But they have to show that they’re willing to correct the harm that was done. We don’t have the funds, we don’t have enough people to undo the problems caused by others. Those pictures were implanted in peoples’ minds.”

Direct Link: <http://qz.com/417805/greenpeace-crashed-the-seal-product-market-and-inuit-livelihood-along-with-it/>

Toronto street signs a reminder of First Nations heritage

Travelling down Ishpadinaa today? Group renames streets to draw attention to the overlooked aboriginal presence in Toronto.



Spadina is a corruption of Ishpedinaa, says a group of activists. The original aboriginal word refers to a place on a hill.

By: [Eric Andrew-Gee](#) Staff Reporter, Published on Tue Jun 02 2015

The intersection of Ishpadinaa and Gete-Onigaming will be unfamiliar to most Torontonians. That's because it's only a day old. And it doesn't officially exist.

On Tuesday afternoon, it stood where Spadina and Davenport Rds. once met. The new street signs, camouflaged in official blue and white, were put up by a pair of aboriginal scholars and activists who have been pasting Ojibwe words across the city for more than two years in an attempt to bring the city's indigenous heritage to public attention.

The project is run by Hayden King, director of the Centre for Indigenous Governance at Ryerson, and Susan Blight, student life co-ordinator at the University of Toronto's First Nations House.

Inspired by the Idle No More movement in December 2012, they set out to remind the city that it stood on aboriginal land, and that it still has a vibrant aboriginal community, often overlooked in discussions of Toronto's past and modern identity, they thought.

"The message is that indigenous people were here — are here now," said Blight, a member of the Couchiching First Nation.

Tuesday's signs, still posted at press time, were inspired by the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report summary, which found that Canada's residential school system amounted to cultural genocide.

Blight and King say that by giving prominence to Ojibwe words, they hope to heal some of the damage caused by educational policies that long discouraged the learning of aboriginal language, sometimes violently.

“Ishpadinaa,” for example, is the word on which “Spadina” is based — it means “a place on a hill,” said King, who is from the Beausoleil First Nation.

“Gete-Onigaming” means “at the old portage,” a reference to Davenport Rd.’s history as a trail between the Don and Humber rivers.

“Toronto” itself comes from a Mohawk word, according to aboriginal language scholar John Stackley — “tkaronto,” meaning “where there are trees standing in the water.” The phrase refers to stakes that members of the Huron tribe installed to make fishing weirs where Lake Simcoe meets Lake Couchiching.

Still, King and Blight believe the city “erases” its aboriginal history, which goes back thousands of years and contains its share of abuse and betrayal.

In 1787, the British government bought the land between Etobicoke Creek and Ashbridges Bay from a group of Mississauga chiefs for 10 shillings —\$60 in today’s money. Historians now agree that the chiefs believed they were leasing the land, not selling it. In 2010, the Mississauga of New Credit won a \$145-million land claim related to the territory.

In 2013, King and Blight pasted a sign onto a plaque outside Queen’s Park that summed up the goal of their project: “We all live on Native territory,” it read. “Welcome to our community. How do you recognize it?”

In an interview Tuesday, Blight said she was fighting the “erasure” of aboriginal language and culture in a city that celebrates its diversity while ignoring the land’s original inhabitants.

“Oftentimes what we see — and these plaques are a good indication of this — is that indigenous people are seen as a blip, a line in a longer colonial history,” she said. “There’s a kind of erasure that happens, and a kind of alienation that happens.”

Asked if she had other locations in mind for future signs, Blight demurred.

“We kind of like the element of surprise,” she said.

Ojibwe street names

Davenport Rd., June 2: *Gete-Onigaming* (Ge-de-oh-ni-guh-ming), meaning “at the old portage.” Thousands of years ago, Davenport was the shoreline of Lake Ontario, and what is now Davenport Rd. was a trail connecting the Humber and the Don rivers.

Spadina Rd., June 2: *Ishpadinaa* (ish-pah-di-naw), meaning “a place on a hill.” The Toronto street name is a “bastardization” of this Ojibwe word, King says.

College St. at Bathurst St., May 2013: *Gikinoo 'amaagegaming* (gi-gi-no – uh-maw-gay-guh ming), meaning “place of learning.” Intended as a direct translation of “college,” and put up to coincide with the “reclaiming” of Greater Victoria’s Mount Douglas, which the Coast Salish people renamed Pkols, their traditional name for the peak.

Indian Road at Bloor St. W., March 2013: Mikana Anishinaabe (mi-gi-nuh uh-ni-shi-naw-bay), meaning “trail of the Anishinaabe,” the collective name of the Ojibwe, Algonquin and Ottawa peoples. King and Blight wanted to criticize the umbrella term “Indian,” which many find offensive. “We just wanted to say, there’s so such thing as an Indian. There are Anishinaabe people and there are Mohawk people,” King said.

Queen St. at Spadina Ave., January 2013: Ogimaa Mikana (oh-gi-maw mi-gi-nuh), meaning “Leader’s Trail,” in honor of the female leaders of Idle No More, the aboriginal protest movement that began in December 2012. The sign was posted as a tribute to the end of Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence’s six-week hunger strike.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/06/02/toronto-street-signs-a-reminder-of-first-nations-heritage.html>

Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement

Nunavut’s new top cop takes command in Iqaluit

“Mike understands the challenges of the North”

LISA GREGOIRE, May 29, 2015 - 11:29 am



The choir from Joamie Ilinniarnvik School in Iqaluit sang a trilingual "O Canada" at the Nunavut RCMP change-of-command ceremony May 28, drawing unexpected applause from RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson. (PHOTO BY LISA GREGOIRE)



The room went quiet after elder Inuapik Sagiaktok spoke during the lighting of the qulliq. RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson, middle, and Nunavut's new Commanding Officer Mike Jeffrey, right, waited patiently as she picked up her purse and jacket and walked to her seat with Deal Alloodloo who had said the prayer. (PHOTO BY LISA GREGOIRE)



Justice Minister Paul Okalik welcomed Mike Jeffrey as Nunavut's 7th commanding officer of Nunavut's "V" Division and commended the RCMP for their safe handling of recent armed standoffs in Iqaluit. (PHOTO BY LISA GREGOIRE)

Michael Jeffrey has one of Nunavut's toughest jobs.

As incoming commanding officer of Nunavut RCMP "V" Division, it's Jeffrey's job to lead a team of officers who work in a place with the highest rates of violent crime, assault, sexual assault and homicide in the country.

He's doing so with very few Inuit and Inuktitut-speaking officers and some detachments that only have two resident officers.

In the past month, he's had to deal with three armed standoffs, [two in Iqaluit](#), one of which unfolded over three days and involved [a neighbourhood under lockdown](#), and a "suspicious package" delivered to the [Nunavut Court of Justice](#).

But Jeffrey seemed at ease, both in his speech and when talking to reporters, following an official change of command ceremony May 28 at Iqaluit's Cadet Hall.

"I am very privileged and humbled to become the 7th annual commanding officer in Nunavut," he said to small audience of colleagues, interested guests and a few Nunavut

politicians, including Justice Minister Paul Okalik and Iqaluit-Tasiluk MLA George Hickes.

He admitted the lack of Inuit police officers is a problem and said it will be a priority of his command to identify and recruit Inuit. “This is a work in progress,” he said.

He acknowledged that Nunavut has a young population and that it will be up to officers, through the DARE program and other community outreach activities, to become role models and mentors to young Nunavummiut to entice them into policing careers.

The RCMP and Inuit are resilient, he said. They can work as a team to make Nunavut a safer place to live.

The RCMP’s top dog, Commissioner Bob Paulson, attended the ceremony and praised Jeffrey in his address to members of the Iqaluit detachment, lined up in red serge, and the small audience who had gathered for the event.

“Mike understands the challenges of the North,” Paulson said.

“I am very, very pleased to welcome Mike into his new role... There is no greater honour in policing than to be responsible and accountable.

The ceremony began with a trilingual version of O Canada sung by the Joamie School choir. Paulson said later he doesn’t normally applaud the anthem but felt compelled to lead the applause on May 28 because he so enjoyed the students’ rendition, which included ayayas at the beginning and end.

Dean Allooloo offered a prayer before and after the ceremony, thanking police officers for helping keep their communities safe and elder Inuapik Sagiaktok lit a qulliq.

As she stood in front of the qulliq, the tiny elder looked small next to the three tall officers at the front of the room — Paulson, Jeffrey and Corps. Sgt. Major Darren Campbell.

Okalik also made a short speech, formally welcoming Jeffrey to Nunavut and thanking the RCMP for resolving the recent standoffs peacefully and without injury.

“As you know, we have many challenges in our territory,” Okalik said.

Jeffrey told reporters later he knows all about those challenges, having spent time at small Nunavut detachments in the early 1990s and again as Iqaluit detachment commander in 1999.

He said the key to dealing with those challenges is to consult the communities, find out what their priorities and focus on those.

He also said he is a firm supporter of restorative justice programs such as wellness courts, which divert certain repeat offenders to mental health and addictions treatment where appropriate.

Traditional justice tools — charges, courts, jails — “don’t always work,” he said. “We understand that.”

But, he cautioned, restorative justice can only be successful if members of the community get involved by supporting the offender and his or her family both during treatment and on the long road that unfolds afterward.

After the change-of-command ceremony, organizers asked audience members to stay seated for an unexpected award ceremony.

Const. Robert Dykstra, a new RCMP member in Iqaluit who recently relocated from Nova Scotia, was recognized with a Commissioner’s Commendation for his tireless investigation into the October 2013 death of Harley Lawrence in Berwick, N.S. — the homeless man who was burned to death in a bus shelter while he slept.

Dykstra helped to track down the two men who committed the horrendous crime. They eventually admitted to killing Lawrence by dousing him with gasoline and setting him on fire and were sentenced to life in prison this past April with no chance of parole for 18 and 20 years.



The head of the RCMP in Canada, Commissioner Bob Paulson, inspects members of the Iqaluit detachment during the May 28 installment of Mike Jeffrey as Nunavut "V" Division commander. (PHOTO BY LISA GREGOIRE)

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavuts_new_top_cop_takes_comm_and_in_iqaluit/

Law firm representing Cree woman fighting murder conviction put into 'custodianship'

[National News](#) | May 29, 2015 by [Jorge Barrera](#)



(Shawn Beaver, left, has been suspended by the Alberta Law Society and his firm put into custodianship. Alexandra Seaman, right, was employed by the firm and represents Connie Oakes in her appeal of a murder conviction. University of Alberta photo.)

Jorge Barrera

APTN National News

The Edmonton law firm employing a lawyer representing a Cree woman fighting a murder conviction before the Alberta Court of Appeal has been put into “custodianship” after its owner was suspended by the law society.

The Law Society of Alberta suspended Shawn Beaver citing the allegations surrounding his “conduct” led the society to conclude the move was “warranted.” Beaver’s law firm Beaver, Leebody, Frank and Associates, was put into the custodianship of Calgary lawyer Brenda Edwards.

Beaver’s law firm employs Alexandra Seaman who is one of two appeal lawyers for Connie Oakes, a Cree woman from Nekaneet First Nation in southern Saskatchewan who was convicted of murdering a man from Medicine Hat., Alta.

“The custodianship order will not affect Ms. Oakes’ appeal and should not take the focus away from the important issues in this case. The custodianship order relates to the conduct of Mr. Beaver and not the conduct of any of the other lawyers previously practicing at Beaver Leebody & Associates,” said Seaman, in a statement.

Edwards also said the custodianship would not “affect” Oakes’ case.

“It will continue to be the same,” she said.

Oakes' other appeal lawyer Aleksandra Simic, who is not part of Beaver's firm, told *APTN National News* also the situation would not impact the appeal process. Simic said the custodianship had to follow a set-out process for all of the law firm's clients.

Oakes is fighting her second degree murder conviction partly on fresh evidence grounds. The Crown's primary witness during the trial now says Oakes wasn't there in a sealed affidavit filed as part of the appeal.

With no murder weapon, DNA or fingerprint evidence linking Oakes to the crime, the police and the Crown relied on the testimony of Wendy Scott, a self-described small town crack dealer with an IQ of 50. Scott initially accused three other people of the murder before claiming she was with Oakes when Casey Armstrong was killed.

A man's size 11 bloody boot print was found on the bathroom floor that police never managed to trace. Armstrong was found dead in his bathtub.

Oakes' recently lost a bid for appeal bail and the National Parole Board twice denied her compassionate leave application. Oakes applied to see her 22 year-old son who was dying of cancer and then applied again to go to his funeral.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/05/29/law-firm-representing-cree-woman-fighting-murder-conviction-put-custodianship/>

Lawyer wants inquiry into aboriginal incarceration in Saskatchewan

Saskatoon lawyer wants to know why Sask. has worse numbers than Alberta, Manitoba

Reported by **CKOM News**

First Posted: Jun 1, 2015 12:48pm | Last Updated: Jun 1, 2015 12:49pm

A Saskatoon criminal defence lawyer wants an inquiry into Saskatchewan's over-incarceration of aboriginals.

Michael Nolin said Saskatchewan has a disproportionately high number of incarcerated aboriginals compared with the rest of the country. That includes Manitoba and Alberta, both provinces with similar aboriginal populations.

"What are the factors in play in Saskatchewan that are causing such a difference?" he asked.

Aboriginals make up approximately 11 per cent of Saskatchewan's population, according to Statistics Canada data from 2011. They represent 16 per cent of the population in Alberta and 14 per cent in Manitoba.

While aboriginal adults in correctional services exceed their representation in the general population in all provinces and territories, the gap is largest in Saskatchewan. The representation is seven times greater (81 per cent), according to 2007-2008 statistics. In Manitoba, 69 per cent of adults sentenced to custody are aboriginal and 39 per cent in Alberta are aboriginal.

As of April 2013, there were 54 active dangerous offenders in Saskatchewan, 45 in Alberta and 17 in Manitoba, according to Corrections Canada.

"What I would like to see is some analysis into what's driving those numbers. Is it a policy directive through Saskatchewan justice? Is it individual prosecutors?" Nolin asked.

"Is it simply that the offender committed a more violent crime and he received a sentence accordingly?"

Recent criticism has been aimed at Saskatchewan judges, saying there is a lack of references to the Gladue factors -- specific factors that need to be considered when sentencing aboriginal offenders-- in sentencing decisions. Nolin said he doesn't think the province's judges are out of tune with the Gladue report.

"They may not be specifically reiterating them in their sentencing decisions, but from a guy that's in the trenches on a day-to-day basis, I see them utilizing them," Nolin said. He believes the system needs better programming to help offenders reintegrate back into society.

He pointed to the fact that the only community correctional centre in Saskatchewan for violent offenders making parole is in Regina.

"If you have an offender who has grown up in an area like Fond du Lac, served his time in the penitentiary in Prince Albert, and he has to reside a portion of his parole in a designated facility according to the parole board, he has to do it in Regina. He's removed probably 1,000 kilometres from his home community and his family. It makes it so much more difficult for an offender to reintegrate under those circumstances."

Nolin suggested that the facility in Regina may be part of the reason why an offender would reoffend.

A call for a full inquiry has been met with some resistance, Nolin said, because the extent of the problem is not fully understood.

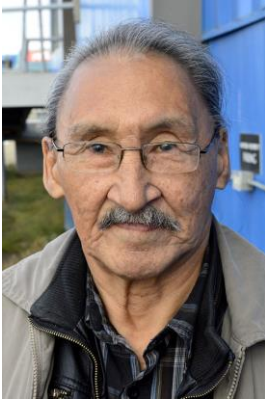
Direct Link: <http://ckom.com/story/lawyer-wants-inquiry-aboriginal-incarceration-saskatchewan/558525>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Nunavut journalism scholarship to honour John Amagoalik

Baffin beneficiaries eligible for \$5,000 annual scholarship

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, May 28, 2015 - 4:07 pm



John Amagoalik is being honoured with a scholarship in his name, courtesy of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association. (FILE PHOTO)

Long time Nunavut leader and *Nunatsiaq News* columnist John Amagoalik is being honoured with a scholarship in his name, courtesy of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association.

The QIA announced May 28 that the organization has launched a \$5,000 John Amagoalik Journalism Scholarship which the QIA will hand out annually.

“We have heard from community members that we need to do more to formally recognize Qikiqtaaluk Inuit who played an integral part in the negotiations leading up to Nunavut,” said QIA President PJ Akeeagok, in the news release.

“The gesture is in recognition of his tremendous contributions in the creation of Nunavut and his continued involvement in the shaping of the Qikiqtaaluk region and the country.”

The scholarship will be open to beneficiary students in the Qikiqtaaluk region who are pursuing post-secondary education in the field of journalism.

Those entering a field that promotes Inuit language and culture will also be considered.

In order to apply, students must:

- have a valid Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. card showing they are a beneficiary of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement within the Qikiqtaaluk region;
- be enrolled in a post-secondary academic institution in the field of journalism for the September and January semesters or in a field of study promoting Inuit language and culture;
- maintain a full course load and maintain a passing grade point average; and,
- must complete and submit an application form.

Applicants have until June 26 to apply. You can find the application form on the QIA website. Under the “Documents” heading, it’s the final document in the list. Or you could go [here](#).

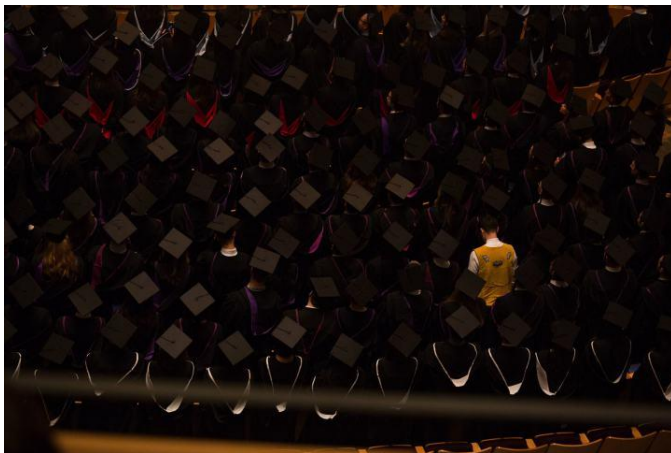
Contact Joanasie Kanayuk at the QIA, 975-8400 or 1-800-667-2742, or contact your local community liaison officer for more information.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_journalism_scholarship_to_honour_john_amagoalik/

UBC student graduates in clothes honouring his Aboriginal culture

By [Justin McElroy](#) Web Producer Global News, May 31, 2015 6:27 pm



Stephen Mussell received his UBC law degree on May 20, 2015, wearing clothes honouring his aboriginal heritage.

UBC law student Stephen Mussell certainly stood out when he received his degree.

Surrounded by black caps and gowns, the 26-year-old Plains Cree/Métis student received his law degree from the University of British Columbia on May 20 wearing a tanned deer hide vest, beaded moccasins, a quillwork bolo tie and eagle feather, clothes that he says reflect his “culture and tradition.”

“As an Indigenous person, law school isn’t easy,” said Mussell, who graduated with a specialization in Aboriginal law. He pointed out that UBC sits on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam people.

“Many of the laws we study and cases we read are disheartening and often upsetting. The cap and gown are an extension of the western legal tradition and I wanted to wear something that was part of my culture and tradition, a culture and tradition I’m extremely proud of.”

Mussell said once he found out from a faculty member that he could wear his regalia rather than the traditional cap and gown, it was an easy decision to make. The vest was made by his girlfriend’s mother, the bolo tie was given to him by his father, and the eagle feather was given by his nohkom (grandmother). “It was important to me that I have something from each of the people in my life that helped me get through, those who supported me on my journey,” he said.

Mussell says he hopes his decision sparks a discussion among non-Indigenous people about perceptions of law and governance, and how Indigenous laws and self-governance can be ignored.

As for fellow Indigenous people, he hopes his outfit is a reminder they can “work within a system that isn’t ours and still maintain our values and identity.”

“For our young ones I simply wanted to show that we’re just as capable as anyone, and that we can accomplish anything we set our minds to. For our old ones I wanted to show thanks. Thanks for being so incredibly strong and maintaining our traditions and cultures through so much pain and adversity.”

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2027909/ubc-student-graduates-in-clothes-honouring-his-aboriginal-culture/>

First Nations chiefs demand investigation into B.C. aboriginal teen's death

The Canadian Press
June 1, 2015 12:14 PM



Paige is shown in this undated handout photo. Government agencies may have broken the law by repeatedly failing to report that an aboriginal teen who died of a drug overdose in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside needed protection, says the head of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO - B.C. Representative for Children and Youth

VANCOUVER - Government agencies may have broken the law by repeatedly failing to report that an aboriginal teen who died of a drug overdose in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside needed protection, says the head of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip called for a police investigation of workers in health care, education, policing and community agencies accused in a report of harbouring a "culture of indifference" toward aboriginal children.

The case of a 19-year-old woman identified only as Paige was highlighted in a scathing report released last month by B.C.'s representative for children and youth, who criticized the province for what she called persistent indifference by front-line workers.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond said Paige's life included open drug use, police encounters and violence, and ended in her death outside a washroom at a park in April 2013.

"Obviously, Paige's horrible story and circumstances are so horrific that we cannot sit idly by and just allow government to simply brush it aside and describe it as being very unfortunate but nonetheless another tragic story from the Downtown Eastside," Phillip said Monday.

"There were so many opportunities for government officials and police officials to intervene, knowing full well that Paige was in harm's way all of her short life and that there should have been an intervention and yet there wasn't."

Phillip's concerns were outlined in a letter to Vancouver Police Chief Adam Palmer on May 27. He recommended that the investigation be led by an outside agency because of the possibility that some concerns could involve officers of the Vancouver Police Department.

"(We) respectfully suggest you consider ways to address the investigation so that all appearance of neutrality and fairness is evident to (the chiefs) and to the public," he wrote.

In a response mailed two days later, Palmer agreed that an "effective investigation" should be handled by an organization at arm's length. He wrote that he had approached acting deputy commissioner Dan Malo of the RCMP's E-Division about the Mounties conducting an investigation.

"The Vancouver Police Department will co-operate in every way possible with any such investigation undertaken, as it did with the investigation by the B.C. representative for children and youth."

RCMP spokesman Rob Vermeulen said in an email the Mounties have not yet received any formal request from the Vancouver police, adding that the proposal appears to have originated through private correspondence so he couldn't comment.

"No question this was a tragic event and we are still examining our potential role in consultation with stakeholders," Vermeulen said.

Provincial legislation says failure to inform the government of a child needing protection is punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and six months in jail.

- See more at: <http://www.timescolonist.com/first-nations-chiefs-demand-investigation-into-b-c-aboriginal-teen-s-death-1.1953800#sthash.ZOjHTNgY.dpuf>

First family doctors trained at Six Nations to graduate



Dr. Scott Elliott, left, site director of the Grand Erie Six Nations Clinical Education Campus at Brantford General Hospital was present for the graduation of family medicine residents Derek Gateman, Al Quinlan, Mathew Chui, Lisa Trojnar, Yonina Mar and Wesley Eby from the McMaster University Michael G.

DeGroote School of Medicine. The six grads represent the Brantford campus' first cohort since it opened in 2013.

Hamilton Spectator

By [Joanna Frketich](#)

May 31, 2015

The first class of family doctors to train at Six Nations, Norfolk and the surrounding area is graduating.

"If you're going to be working with a community, you need to understand that community and live in it," said Dr. David Price, head of family medicine at McMaster University and Hamilton Health Sciences. "It's an important aspect of this."

The university was already training family doctors in Hamilton, Halton, Niagara, Brampton, Kitchener and rural areas such as Collingwood and Owen Sound.

Adding Six Nations, Brantford, Brant and Norfolk was "the last piece of the puzzle," said Price.

The first six family medicine residents — Derek Gateman, Al Quinlan, Mathew Chui, Lisa Trojnar, Yonina Mar and Wesley Eby — started in July 2013 and finished at the end of June.

One trained at Six Nations with award-winning family physician Karen Hill, who works with a traditional healer.

"Karen has been good at partnering with traditional healers and doing a bit of a mix of Western and traditional medicine," said Price.

At least three are staying in the area to practise.

"Research shows that eight of 10 residents who train in a community over time end up staying in that community so it's very good for retention," said Dr. Scott Elliott, the site director of the new campus.

It also helped McMaster find placements for its 200 family medicine residents and 600 medical students.

"They have more residents than they have places to put them sometimes so they look beyond the Hamilton environment," said Elliott. "It allows them to distribute the education outside the Hamilton area into the community. When you really think about it, where is a better place to train a family doctor than in the community where they're going to likely end up working."

The campuses outside of Hamilton have been popular. McMaster has been filling almost all of the spots on the first round of matching residents with programs.

Dr. Derek Gateman called it a perfect fit for himself and his fiancée, Lisa Trojnar, who is also graduating from the program.

"We liked McMaster's curriculum but we knew we didn't want to live in the City of Hamilton. It was just too big for us," he said.

The 26-year-old is from a town of about 1,800 in Bruce County called Chesley. Trojnar is from Grimsby. The couple, who are getting married in October, met at medical school at the University of Western Ontario.

"I came from a small town and I knew I wanted to go back to being a small town and rural family doctor," said Gateman.

However, the couple didn't want to train in a place where they'd be the only family medicine residents.

"We knew we wanted to come to a community that was small enough to be similar to where we would work in the future but not small enough that we were too isolated," said Gateman.

He plans to stay in Brantford for now while Trojnar is going to Kingston for further training.

The new family doctor says he has been stopped on the street by residents offering congratulations on his graduation.

"I feel like that reflects an appreciation in the city and a need for graduates like us."

Direct Link: <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5653664-first-family-doctors-trained-at-six-nations-to-graduate/>

The new program that has First Nations' reading scores soaring

A revolutionary program from the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative has transformed two First Nations schools in Ontario

[John Geddes](#), June 2, 2015

At the start of the school day one morning earlier this month, Dayna Thunder, 11, sat polishing an application letter for a job at Tim Hortons. She had pretty much nailed this writing exercise—perfect grammar, neat presentation—by the time a visitor showed up at her Grade 6 class at Hillside School, run by the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation in

southwestern Ontario. So Dayna didn't mind taking a break from the draft on her computer screen to chat.

She had not much to say, it turned out, about the imaginary Tims job. But Dayna lit up when the conversation shifted to the several novels she had recently devoured from the short list for the Forest of Reading awards, presented every year by the Ontario Library Association for the best new children's books. Asked what sort of career she really has in mind, Dayna didn't hesitate. "I would like to be a librarian or a historian," she said.

Only a few years ago, such bookish ambitions would have seemed incongruous for a kid studying at Hillside. Like many First Nations schools across Canada, reading wasn't taught very successfully in this Ojibwa community on the shores of Lake Huron. Teachers tended to attribute their students' struggles to the community of about 2,000, which suffers from its share of the economic and social problems all too common on reserves. If kids failed, teachers "kind of got into the excuse game," says principal Cathy Hampshire. "Oh, well, they can't do this. Let's make them feel good, let's make them feel safe at school."

All that started to change in 2010, when the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative, founded by former Liberal prime minister Paul Martin, brought a model school project to Hillside, and also to Walpole Island Elementary School, in another Ojibwa community about a two-hour drive from Kettle Point. The project's aim was to overhaul the way reading and writing was taught to students like Dayna. Four years later, the test results they achieved were nothing short of inspiring.

When the project was launched, only 13 per cent of Grade 3 students at the two schools met or exceeded Ontario's target for reading proficiency when they took the province's standardized test from the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). By 2014, 67 per cent of Grade 3 kids at Hillside and Walpole Island Elementary School met or bettered that EQAO standard, just a shade below the 70 per cent of students who succeeded province-wide at public schools.

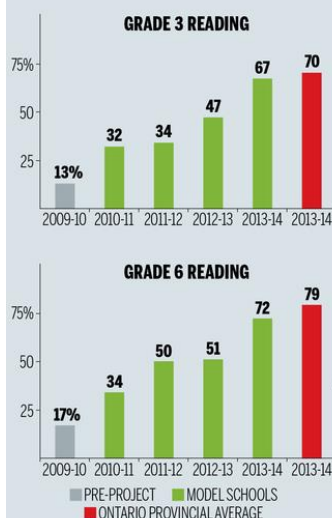
Even more remarkably, on the EQAO writing test, only 33 per cent of Grade 3 pupils at the two schools achieved or bettered the provincial standard before the project began, but a stellar 91 per cent did so by 2014—strides in front of the province-wide 78 per cent success rate. Similar steady progress was tracked in the EQAO tests for Grade 6 students at the two schools, who started out falling far behind the Ontario average, but after four years of the project, had nearly caught up with their province-wide peers.

News of the rapid progress—first reported this past winter when the Martin initiative released summary results—arrives at a time when First Nations badly need cause for hope when it comes to education. On June 2, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, created in 2007 to probe the history of thousands of Aboriginal children sent to government-funded, church-run residential schools through much of the 20th century, is slated to table its final report.



TURNING THE PAGE

Test scores from two on-reserve schools improved remarkably with help from the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative



MACLEAN'S

Sources: Photograph by Cole Garside; "Wijj Kikendaasodaa: Let's all learn," by Julia O'Sullivan, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (2015)

The dark legacy of residential schools, where many children were mistreated and forced to abandon their languages and traditions, looms over any discussion about on-reserve education. The last of the residential schools closed in 1996, but federally funded First Nations schools still fail to prepare most Aboriginal kids to succeed. According to 2011 Statistics Canada figures, 58 per cent of on-reserve Aboriginal students drop out of high school, compared to 10 per cent of non-Aboriginal teenagers.

The latest bid to usher in a new era was Prime Minister Stephen Harper's attempt to negotiate an agreement with the Assembly of First Nations on a new First Nations Control of First Nations Education Act. But the terms of that law, which sought to boost standards in on-reserve schools, caused a bitter split within the AFN, and the lobby group for about 600 bands ultimately voted last year to reject it—losing \$1.9 billion in new federal funding that would have come with the reforms.

Against this backdrop of epic historic wrongs and current political deadlock, the model school project stands as beacon. Martin says the idea emerged a few years ago after his initiative learned about the problems of First Nations students at the high school level,

where his group offers training in entrepreneurship to Aboriginal teenagers. “Kids who drop out in Grade 10 don’t really drop out in Grade 10,” Martin says. “They dropped out in Grade 4, 5, or 6, because they didn’t learn to read and write.”

Looking for ways to intervene earlier, Martin sought advice from the foundation of software billionaire Bill Gates, which had worked on fostering literacy in the U.S. To his surprise, the Gates foundation recommended that he meet with a group of educators in Toronto, who had attracted wide praise a few years earlier by turning around literacy standards at previously low-achieving public schools in Ontario. That introduction led to Martin to Julia O’Sullivan, dean of the University of Toronto’s Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, who signed on as chief adviser to his model school project.

Martin approached the chiefs of Walpole Island and Kettle Point to ask if they were interested. They readily agreed. Securing solid support from community leaders, especially the school principals, was crucial. The incentive was obvious: the Martin initiative, with key additional backing from the Pathy Family Foundation and the Lawrence and Judith Tanenbaum Family Foundation, would spend about \$1 million over five years in each of the two schools.

But O’Sullivan says the promise of new resources came with the prospect of hard work, especially for teachers. The core of the “turnaround school” model developed for Ontario public schools was intensive training for teachers in better methods for teaching reading and writing. To actually provide this mandatory professional development, O’Sullivan recruited Vaughan Stoyka, a highly regarded teacher from the Peel District School Board, just west of Toronto. They had previously worked closely together on the Ontario government initiative. “When Mr. Martin asked me to do this,” O’Sullivan says, “I said I’d do it on one condition—get Vaughan.”

For four years, Stoyka was a continuous presence at the at Hillside and Walpole Island schools. But what exactly did she do? In an interview, she resists offering any simple answers. “I was a cheerleader, mentor, trainer,” Stoyka says. Walpole principal Steve Styers, a Mohawk of Ontario’s Six Nations, says the training Stoyka gave teachers was integral to the project’s success. “It wasn’t just, ‘Here’s the program,’ ” Styers says. “She sat and watched the teachers. She tailored the professional development to their style. She got beat up a little at the start—all of us are a little suspicious when somebody rides in to save the day.”

Nobody is suspicious anymore. Stoyka instilled new techniques, grounded in academic research, about how kids learn about language, and how a classroom should be organized. A key change was establishing a non-negotiable rule that reading and writing would be taught for 100 minutes every morning from kindergarten to Grade 8. Other activities are not allowed to intrude. “You’re not doing this or that,” Stoyka says. “This is when you must be teaching.”

She also stressed the vital link between verbal language and literacy. “Oral language is a grounding for reading,” she says. “You have to know this as a teacher.” Around Hillside

and Walpole, teachers now are often heard prompting students to speak in complete sentences, for example, or use the correct pronouns. Stoyka says this emphasis on speaking well, as a step toward reading and writing, may be less important in schools where many students are growing up in prosperous households where they're likely to pick up verbal skills on their own.

The project also insisted on setting a clear goal: raise those EQAO test scores to the provincial standard. Teachers are often reluctant to put too much emphasis on tests. But tests were used extensively at Hillside and Walpole, both to pinpoint students' needs and track their progress. "Testing was huge," says Nebeesh Shognosh, a teacher born and raised in Walpole Island, who took on a special "literacy liaison" role between the Martin initiative and the school, and administered a wide range of tests. "At the beginning, I didn't give EQAO a lot of credibility," says Hillside Grade 3 teacher Katie Padfield. "But it's a game you've got to play to bring glory to these kids."

As test scores started to rise, those results gave the schools a new way to engage parents. "We just kept putting out our success stories time and time again through newsletters [sent] home," Styers says. Spreading pride in what the students were accomplishing changed the place of the schools in community life. "You don't see our school all graffitied up," says Chief Tom Bressette of Kettle Point. "There are no broken windows."



Yet it didn't always go smoothly. A few teachers wouldn't adjust, and no longer work at either of the two schools, where there are no teachers' unions. "I knew I was going to take a hard line with staff," Styers says. Hampshire says attitudes changed when teachers realized the project brought tangible advantages. "These were teachers who hadn't seen new books, hadn't seen professional development, because the money just wasn't there."

Both principals say the Martin initiative offered them unprecedented support. On-reserve schools are funded by the federal government, usually at a lower level per student than

comparable provincially funded public schools. As well, they lack the support of any nearby board of education. Styers says the Martin initiative often acted the way a good school board would. Suddenly, he had someone to call for practical help and professional advice.

But the backbone of the project was training for teachers, expertly tailored by Stoyka for whatever was happening in their classrooms. She typically led mandatory professional development sessions every two weeks at both schools for four years. “This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” Styers says, “and we had to milk it for all it was worth.”

O’Sullivan says the need to upgrade teachers’ skills points to an issue that goes beyond First Nations schools to university education faculties. “We do not do a good enough job preparing teachers to teach reading and writing well,” she says. In middle-class communities, where most kids are exposed at home to books and written material online, parents might make up for a teacher’s shortcomings. But “in schools that serve high-needs populations,” O’Sullivan says, “we have children who need excellent teaching most, and they suffer most if they don’t get it.”

And they perhaps benefit most when teaching improves, as the project’s test scores seem to show. But can those gains be sustained? The project has now shifted into a two-year monitoring phase. Stoyka is no longer visiting every two weeks. The teachers are expected to keep teaching effectively without that outside support—and pressure. As well, their principals note that the project was never a panacea. Reading and writing are much improved, but, Styers says, “We struggle on math.”

The project’s upside, however, is undeniable. One key benefit is a plunge in the number of students identified as having “special needs,” requiring expensive outside-the-classroom interventions like speech therapy. At the two schools, the percentage of kindergarten to Grade 3 students assessed as having special needs dropped to 19 per cent from 45 per cent over the project’s life; in Grades 4 to 6, those labelled as having special needs fell to four per cent from 24 per cent. “The teaching improved, the expectations went up, and which children really have special needs became apparent,” O’Sullivan explains.



Martin says savings from far lower special-needs demands should help offset the cost of making the project's approach available to every Aboriginal community that wants it. He says First Nations are "flooding" his group with requests. But while his initiative, with support from two other philanthropic foundations, was able to pay for the pilot projects, only government could finance the program nationally. "At some point," Martin says, "when you've demonstrated that the system can be reformed, and the First Nations want it, government has to say, 'This is a good thing and we'll support it.' " But that is unlikely to happen anytime soon. Martin is a Liberal elder statesman and a blunt, outspoken critic of the Harper government's Aboriginal policies. No approach with his name attached is likely to gain traction with the Conservatives in office.

Still, Carlana Lindeman, education director of Martin's initiative, sees tantalizing national potential. She estimates the project's approach could be replicated anywhere in Canada for about \$350,000 a year at schools on First Nations linked to highways, and perhaps \$500,000 in more remote reserves. "There's a lot of optimism that this would not be hard to transfer to other jurisdictions," Lindeman says. Not hard, that is, with enough political will and public financing.

Kids aren't apt to think of themselves as guinea pigs for public policy. Three poised Grade 8 students at Walpole exchange shrugs when asked about the way they've been taught for the past few years. Still, they seem to have soaked up the benefits. Corbin Jacobs talks of becoming a social worker to help those struggling in his community. Kallie Johnson has a clear plan to study baking at community college and then open her own pastry business. Desi Sands wants to be a veterinarian. And why not? They read and write well enough to aspire to anything. If only that was as unexceptional in all First Nations classrooms as it has become for kids in these two lucky schools.

Direct Link: <http://www.macleans.ca/education/the-new-program-that-has-first-nations-reading-scores-soaring/>

First Nations school offers alternative for students who 'get lost in the cracks'



Michael Shulman, CTVNews.ca
Published Monday, June 1, 2015 7:14PM EDT

A B.C. school for First Nations students is offering an alternative education for youth who have fallen through the cracks of the public system.

The [I Count High School](#) opened in 2012 in the small village of Moricetown, in central B.C. It serves students in Grades 8 through 12 who "for whatever reason, may be having difficult fitting into the regular school system"

Dale Cutler, a teacher at iCount, told CTV's Power Play that two retired educators from the nearby town of Smithers, B.C., came up with idea after seeing local students skipping school.

The I Count High School for First Nations students is offering an alternative education for youth who have fallen through the cracks of the public system.

"They had seen the need for schooling, there are a lot of students in our small community ... not attending school and wandering the streets ... during school hours," said Cutler.

Unlike mainstream schools, iCount says it offers an education that focuses on not only academic goals, but also other aspects of a youth's life, such as cultural, social and personal growth.

"We really connect with the students on a one-on-one level; we have a real family vibe here at our school," said Cutler

"And that formed over months of bonding with the students, (by) doing activities with them outside (the school) and finding out who they are ... what drives them and what makes them happy," he added.

In particular, Cutler said the school places an emphasis on traditional First Nations culture. He said aboriginal languages, the harvesting and preparation of traditional foods, and songs and dances are all taught to students.

"We really incorporate a lot of our cultural teachings – it is really important to us."

Cutler said the school goes "above and beyond" meeting provincial educational standards, even offering summer employment, driver's education and first aid courses.

"(It is all) stuff that they would never have done before," said Cutler.

But most importantly, Cutler said iCount offers First Nations youth a sense of "belonging" and a chance to get an education tailored to their personal needs.

"It is not that they don't instill that in the regular school system, it is just that there are so many students ... that (they) get lost in the cracks," said Cutler.

"They have amazing teachers ... but they can't reach everybody."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/first-nations-school-offers-alternative-for-students-who-get-lost-in-the-cracks-1.2401712>

Nunavut announces funds to study feasibility of Arctic university



People walk along a path in Iqaluit, Nunavut on Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2014. (Sean Kilpatrick / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

The Canadian Press

Published Tuesday, June 2, 2015 4:44PM EDT

IQALUIT, Nunavut -- The government of Nunavut has announced it will take the next step toward creating an Arctic university by funding a feasibility study.

"The purpose is to enable access to higher education at home that represents our diverse land," Nunavut Commissioner Nellie Kusugak said Tuesday in a speech opening the new session of the territorial legislature.

"It remains evident there is a direct correlation among relationships between employment, higher earnings and higher education."

The idea for a university in Canada's Arctic has been around for years, but it has gained new energy after a recent high-level report written by northern educators, government and land-claim organizations.

That report recommended a university be located in Iqaluit and suggested the school would need to be independent of government and Inuit organizations. While it would be open to all, it would mostly serve Inuit students from across the North.

Classes in traditional Inuit knowledge and language would be mandatory. Elders could be given the same status -- and salary -- as full professors.

The report proposed an initial course list of Inuit studies, fine arts, linguistics, political science and indigenous governance, education, health, natural science and law.

Quebec-based mining company Agnico Eagle, which operates a gold mine in Nunavut, recently offered the territory \$5 million to start a university.

Kusugak added that the Nunavut government would also initiate a law school by 2017, offered by Nunavut Arctic College with help from the territory's Justice Department. In 2005, Nunavut graduated 11 Inuit lawyers through a program offered through the University of Victoria.

There are some opportunities for post-secondary education in the territory. Nunavut Arctic College brokers degrees in education and nursing through southern institutions. The University of the Arctic offers distance education through more than 100 institutions around the northern world.

But Canada remains the only Arctic nation in the world that doesn't have a university located in its North.

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/nunavut-announces-funds-to-study-feasibility-of-arctic-university-1.2403205>

Quebec seeks to teach more about First Nations in schools



CTV Montreal

Published Wednesday, June 3, 2015 5:14PM EDT

Last Updated Wednesday, June 3, 2015 7:10PM EDT

First Nations in Quebec have a difficult history – one the government thinks everyone should learn about.

After the damning Truth and Reconciliation report released Tuesday about residential schools across Canada, the Quebec government is hoping to teach children about First Nations.

“What breaks my heart is that for so long we said to the First Nations of our country that their language and their culture were worthless,” said Native Affairs Minister Geoffrey Kelley.

Kelley wants more First Nations history taught in schools.

Minister Kelley is speaking to Education Minister Francois Blais, and said he wants changes to the curricula in elementary, high schools and CEGEPs.

He’s hoping lessons about a dark time in Canada's past will lead to better lives for First Nations in the future, adding that the federal Indian Act is unfair to Aboriginals.

“It's true. Just read the Indian Act. Indians are not treated like you and me,” he said.

Some First Nations children from Quebec who attended residential schools for 150 years until the 1970s were physically and sexually abused, according to the Truth and Reconciliation report.

They also weren't taught their native language and culture in what the report says amounts to “cultural genocide.”

Aboriginals should be properly financed by Ottawa, since they are under federal jurisdiction, said PQ leader Pierre Karl Peladeau, who also agrees Quebec children should know more about First Nations history and culture.

Peladeau brought his own children to the Wendake Huron first nation

“We had for the dinner an hour-long meeting with an historian that was telling us about the First Nations in Quebec. I found that very instructive,” he said.

Direct Link: <http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/quebec-seeks-to-teach-more-about-first-nations-in-schools-1.2405107>

Providing inspirational guidance to First Nations youth in Calgary

CTV Calgary Staff

Published Wednesday, June 3, 2015 1:22PM MDT

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A move from a small community to the big city can be a challenging ordeal for anyone but for young adults leaving the First Nation the change of culture can be daunting.

Tim Fox, the manager of aboriginal initiatives at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, has firsthand knowledge of the difficulties First Nations youth may face.

"I come from the Blood Reserve," said Tim. "I was raised there and grew up with some challenges when I moved to the city."



Tim Fox takes part in a smudging ceremony at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary

"For me, I have a four year old daughter so it's important to invest in the younger generation."

Time facilitates regular gatherings of First Nations young people at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary. The meetings embrace some aboriginal traditions including a smudging ceremony, a cleansing ritual.

Rhea Bull Bear spent her formative years on the Siksika Nation, southeast of Calgary, before moving to Calgary. She appreciates Tim's contributions to the meetings at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary.

"He's always looking for a better future for us," said Rhea. "I don't feel so alone anymore."

Dawn Leonard, director of education, employment and aboriginal initiatives at Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, finds Tim Fox inspiring on a number of levels.

"For me, he's a true example of what a leader is in our community," said Dawn. "I think that he's a role model for our young people and he's constantly looking for opportunities and experiences that will connect our children, youth and families to community and to each other."

A recent experience involved Tim and members of the Aboriginal Youth Leadership Team building homes in Mexico as part of the Hope for Homes initiative.

Tim says as the number of aboriginals coming into the city looking for educational and work opportunities continues to grow, the Boys and Girls Clubs organizers are doing their best to make young people aware of the services that are available.

“I think for aboriginal youth it's not easy to access and navigate the system,” said Tim. “It's easier when workers and aboriginal professionals go to youth and reach out to them.”

Tim Fox, this week's CTV Inspiring Albertan, says he'll continue to do everything possible to assist aboriginal youth in Calgary.

Direct Link: <http://calgary.ctvnews.ca/providing-inspirational-guidance-to-first-nations-youth-in-calgary-1.2404907>

Largest class of First Nations students graduate

Christina Martens/Wetaskiwin Times

Wednesday, June 3, 2015 3:23:43 MDT PM



Graduating First Nations students received an eagle feather from Roy Louis at the Wetaskiwin Composite High School's convocation ceremony May 29.

During the 2015 Wetaskiwin Composite High School graduation ceremony May 29, 179 graduates received their diplomas and 30 of them were presented with an eagle feather.

The eagle feather was handed to all the First Nations, Inuit and Métis students in the graduating class by Maskwacis elder and Cultural Advocate for Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools Roy Louis.

This year, 30 were given out at the graduation and another five will be presented to a handful of students who need to increase their marks to graduate. This is the largest number of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students to receive eagle feathers in Wetaskiwin.

“The eagle feather for us,” said Gloria Rogers, First Nations, Métis, Inuit Education support worker and graduation coach, “shows you stay on your path you will eventually soar. You fulfill your dreams you have in your life.”

It reminds the students, she said, of the importance of following the Grandfather’s teachings of courage, trust, love, respect, honesty, wisdom and humility.

“The eagle feather encourages you to be strong. To find the gifts the Creator has given you.”

The fact 35 students have received, or will receive, the eagle feather is significant to the Maskwacis community, said Rogers, as it means change is taking place in the community and education is becoming important in the lives of community members.

“First Nations kids are taking that risk, self-esteem is being built and they are becoming more tuned with how important education is to follow their dreams,” she said. “There is also more support from parents and families. It’s a domino effect. Families are seeing it’s possible. It’s attainable. You can’t pull these kids down — they can have the best of both worlds.”

As education increases in value among First Nations people, Rogers said there will be more graduates receiving an eagle feather in coming graduations; predicting 40 next year.

Direct Link: <http://www.wetaskiwintimes.com/2015/06/03/largest-class-of-first-nations-students-graduate>

Niagara College opens aboriginal student centre

By [Karena Walter](#), The Standard

Wednesday, June 3, 2015 7:59:41 EDT PM



President Dan Patterson sign a Protocol as Elder Stephen Paquette watches. Niagara College opened its new Aboriginal Student Resource Centre Wednesday June 3, 2015 at its Niagara-on-the-Lake campus. Bob Tymczyszyn/St. Catharines Standard/Postmedia Network

Niagara College's new Aboriginal Student Resource Centre is more than just a room.

It's a place to build community, says student Celeste Smith.

"This is part of that cultural awareness a lot of students don't have," said Smith, explaining the new room is a place for self-growth.

"It's not just a place to sit and do your homework."

Niagara College celebrated the grand opening of the centre Wednesday at its Niagara-on-the-Lake campus. The dedicated space for Indigenous students will be used for cultural programming, events, workshops and elder teachings.

But it's also a place to drop in and hang out, study, use the computers and check out the library for Indigenous resources.

The school has had a similar centre at the Welland Campus since 1992.

Smith, a Haudenosaunee, was determined to get a centre at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus when she came to the school two years ago and joined the Aboriginal Education Management Circle to advocate for it.

The school had been trying to years to open a centre, but space at the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus was at a premium.

"I'm so happy to see it before I graduate," said Smith, who graduates June 16 and has plans to go to Brock and then law school for aboriginal law.

She said students have been coming into the centre since it unofficially opened in March.

"This is it. This is reconciliation. This is what we need. This is what we want."

Niagara College has 180 aboriginal students that have identified themselves.

“Many are far from home, so it’s important for them to feel connected,” said Donna Gerber, manager of First Nations, Metis and Inuit student services.

She said they can connect with each other and with different services in the community, like the friendship centres.

“We can better support them,” she said. “It’s key to retention and helping them graduate.”

Rick Anderson, acting vice president student and external relations, said the space will not only support students but is a launching point to share other world views.

He expects international students and others will learn from it as well.

Anderson, of Six Nations of Grand River, said the timing for the grand opening was great with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report released this week. Everything that’s happened because of residential schools is huge, he said. Opening a room seems small in scope, but it’s those small things that make a difference.

“It creates a dialogue and an awareness,” he said.

The celebration Wednesday included an opening prayer and blessing of the centre by Aboriginal elder Stephen Paquette, eagle feather presentations and an honour song by potential student Joe Shawana.

It capped off with Niagara College President Dan Patterson signing the Indigenous Education Protocol for Colleges and Institutes. The protocol, launched in December 2014, provides a vision of how colleges and institutes can strive to improve their practices and better serve Indigenous Peoples.

Direct Link: <http://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/2015/06/03/niagara-college-opens-aboriginal-student-centre>

Winnipeg high school focuses on First Nations history, culture



CTVNews.ca Staff

Published Wednesday, June 3, 2015 11:21PM EDT

Students at a Winnipeg high school spent class time on Wednesday looking closer at the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

It is familiar subject matter at Children of the Earth High School, which opened in 1991 to provide First Nations-focused education in an urban setting.

“Here at Children of the Earth they lobbied to help bring back that positive self-identity, that positive self-confidence, that confidence in our people,” said cultural advisor Cara Widrick.



Students at Winnipeg's Children of the Earth High School learn about First Nations history and culture.

Many of the students’ grandparents and great-grandparents lived in residential schools where their cultural practices and languages were erased.

An intergenerational effect of the oppression is that some of the students arrive at the school without even knowing to which First Nation they belong.

Children of the Earth exposes them to Cree and Ojibway languages, smudging ceremonies and First-Nations-focused history classes.

On Wednesday, discussion in teacher Sharon Sky’s class ranged from the significance of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to the 2008 federal government apology.

Her students are the seventh generation of First Nations people working to overcome a history of forced assimilation and racism.

“Racism plays a big part in this, basically because it keeps cancelling out truth and reconciliation,” said student Gordon Parisian.

Near the school is one of Canada’s poorest neighbourhoods. Most of the population is aboriginal.

It’s a stark reminder of the challenges facing Canada.

“We still have the highest poverty rate, the highest diabetes rate,” said Sky. “We still have the highest unemployment rate, suicide rate.”

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/winnipeg-high-school-focuses-on-first-nations-history-culture-1.2405720>

Keep First Nations kids in their homes

Posted: **06/3/2015 6:25 PM** | Last Modified: 06/4/2015 6:54 AM

Manitoba is living proof the racist federal policies of previous centuries that attempted to eradicate the "Indian problem" are not history. The effects can be seen today in the lives of First Nations people, and no where more vividly than in child welfare. This province has to stop the flow of aboriginal children coming into the care of the state. Tweaking long-standing approaches to protect First Nations kids from neglect or harm in the home will not work.

It’s time for a family services makeover, one that sees First Nations getting more, not less, control of child-protection services.



Charlotte Boubard holds her daughter, Toni, while singing at Winnipeg's Thunderbird House after the Walk for Reconciliation on Tuesday.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's executive summary traces the trickle-down effect of Indian residential schools and the broader policy of forced assimilation that guided Canadian aboriginal law from the late 1800s on. Among the most enduring effects of the residential school era was that First Nations children who were raised, for the most part, by religious orders lost contact with their parents and were robbed of identity and self-worth.

Many of the 150,000-plus students who passed through the schools emerged scarred and fell to addictions, poverty and despair. When they had babies of their own, they were at sea when it came to parenting.

That led to a rebound effect, the TRC found. Starting in the 1940s, First Nations kids were funnelled into regular public schools, but residential schools saw their enrolments rise. Why? By 1952, some 40 per cent of students were orphans or from "broken homes." By 1960, "the federal government estimated that 50 per cent of the children in residential schools were there for child-welfare reasons."

The Sixties Scoop — native children adopted out of the province or out of the country — compounded the generational fallout.

Today, not surprisingly, Canada's child-welfare systems are filled with aboriginal children. Manitoba has the country's highest rate: about 88 per cent of the 10,000-plus children in care of the state are aboriginal.

The commission says the child-welfare system is a continuation of assimilation residential-school style. That's unfair. Child-welfare agencies do not scoop up kids to make them "white," and must make their case for guardianship before a judge.

The TRC's own research shows investigations and apprehensions for maltreatment are much higher among aboriginal people.

And, today, native child-welfare agencies are becoming the norm in Canada.

They, however, are following provincial law in that job. Children are still being placed in non-aboriginal homes. And in Manitoba, where the move to native child-welfare control was badly bungled, First Nation-led services have been set back with the province now in control of the Southern and Northern family services authorities.

Canada has to address the debilitating social conditions that are feeding the flow of First Nations children into child-welfare systems. That will cost the federal and provincial governments money for preventive programs.

The TRC is right in calling for a cultural shift in the control and delivery of family services. While "Canada has rejected First Nations' demands to operate services in accordance with traditional laws," in the U.S., tribal authority is respected. Tribal courts

have exclusive jurisdiction over child custody matters. The U.S. has seen its rate of apprehensions fall, in part because of increased spending to keep families together.

Manitoba has seen tragic results when CFS agencies put family preservation into effect, without the necessary supports to ensure those homes are healthy and can cope. That cannot happen again.

But there are good models, in Canada and in Manitoba, that show First Nations can successfully deliver care to families in ways that reflect traditional values. It is time this province, especially, makes the shift to replicate those approaches and invests in ways that let First Nations communities do what's right for their kids.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/editorials/Keep-First-Nations-kids-at-home-306065391.html>

Aboriginal Health

UBC receives two \$1-million donations to fund indigenous health studies

by [Charlie Smith](#) on June 1st, 2015 at 12:36 PM



The Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health is associated with the School of Population and Public Health, UBC

Aboriginal health research at UBC has been given a boost a day before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report is scheduled to be released.

UBC president Arvind Gupta has announced that the university's Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health has received two \$1-million donations.

Chancellor Lindsay Gordon and his wife Elizabeth provided one of the cheques. The other came from the North family (Rudy, Patricia, Caroline, and Rory).

“In order to extend aboriginal life expectancy or lower aboriginal infant mortality, UBC must work as an equal partner with those communities,” Gupta said in a [news release](#). “The generous contributions of the Gordons and the Norths will support this vital work.”

Elizabeth Gordon has volunteered with the Franciscan Sisters of Atonement in the Downtown Eastside, where she developed a keen interest in indigenous people's health.

Nearly half of the Gordon family's donation will deliver financial aid to First Nations students.

Rudy North is chair and founder of North Growth Management and has long been associated with environmental causes. He previously donated \$1 million to BCIT to help create the Rivers Institute and fund a chair in river ecology.

The Norths' gift will fund mentorship for indigenous high-school students, support a summer science program, and result in a certificate program in aboriginal health.

Direct Link: <http://www.straight.com/blog/461811/ubc-receives-two-1-million-donations-fund-indigenous-health-studies>

Aboriginal History

Frozen Garden of Eden: Research Says the Inuit Came from Alaska's North Slope

[Alex Ewen](#)

5/29/15

A new [paper](#) published on April 29, 2015 in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* suggests that all Inuit peoples originally came from the northernmost part of Alaska, in the region known as Alaska's North Slope. The study, entitled “Mitochondrial Diversity of Inupiat people from the Alaskan North Slope Provides Evidence for the Origins of the Paleo- and Neo-Eskimo Peoples,” sampled the DNA of Inupiat volunteers (in the U.S. they are Inupiat and in Canada they are Inuit) living in northern Alaska. According to lead author M. Geoffrey Hayes, an assistant professor at Northwestern University, their research provides “the first evidence that genetically ties all of the Inupiat and Inuit populations from Alaska, Canada and Greenland back to the Alaskan North Slope.”

The ancestors of the Inuit spread from Alaska eastwards, eventually settling as far away as Greenland. According to current anthropological thought, modern Inuit are believed to be descended from “Neo-Eskimos” or “Young Eskimos” (also known as the Thule people) that spread across the Arctic replacing or intermarrying the Paleo-Eskimos, or “Ancient Eskimos.” Although the timing of this migration is uncertain, it is believed by scientists that the Neo-Eskimos began moving out of Alaska more than 1,000 years ago during the Medieval Warm Period, when the climate in the Arctic was milder, reaching Greenland sometime around 1300 AD.

The term Eskimo, although considered pejorative in Canada, is still widely used in the U.S. to describe the Indigenous Peoples living in the Arctic Circle region of North America. The Eskimo language stock not only encompasses the Inuit language family (of which Inupiat is a subset), but also the Yupik language family. The Yupik are also historically located in Alaska as well as in Siberia. It is generally agreed that the Yupik, like the Inuit, originated in Alaska, but portions of the Yupik then migrated westward into Siberia. The Yupik were not included in this study.

The Eskimo (Inuit and Yupik) languages are closely related to that of the Aleut, but the language super-stock, Eskimo-Aleut, is not known to be related to any other language group. Thus the Eskimo and Aleut are not related to American Indians, but unfortunately they are often grouped together in scientific and government studies, leading to serious confusions.

Not only did this new study provide evidence that the Inuit originated in Alaska and then spread eastward through Canada and into Greenland, but it also found Paleo-Eskimo DNA in the modern Inupiat peoples, indicating that the Inuit are direct descendants from the Ancient Eskimos. “There has never been a clear biological link found in the DNA of the Paleo-Eskimos, the first people to spread from Alaska into the eastern North American arctic, and the DNA of Neo-Eskimos,” but now, Hayes argues, “our study suggests that the Alaskan North Slope serves as the homeland for both of those groups, during two different migrations.”

This is the first genetic study of modern-day Inupiat people and came at the request of Inupiat elders from Barrow, Alaska, who were interested in using scientific methods to learn more about their history. Hayes and a team of scientists extracted DNA from saliva samples given by 151 volunteers living in eight different North Slope communities. The scientists sequenced and analyzed mitochondrial DNA, which is passed down from mother to child with few changes from generation to generation, and found the haplogroups A2a, A2b, D4b1a and D2.

Haplogroups A2a and A2b are common among modern Eskimos, but until this study the haplogroup D2 had only been found in the remains of ancient Paleo-Eskimos. D4b1a is a common haplogroup of the Neo-Eskimos or Thule, the group that came after the Paleo-Eskimos. According to Hayes, the study’s findings fit well with the elders’ oral traditions of Inupiat history.

The origins of the Eskimos and Aleuts are, like the origins of American Indians, shrouded in mystery and the source of much controversy. According to the modern scientific consensus, the progenitors of the Paleo-Eskimos and Aleuts settled in Alaska sometime about 5,500 years ago from Siberia, although this date is now being disputed and there is little evidence that suggests they were originally from Siberia. Up until recently it was presumed that Greenland had been settled by Paleo-Eskimos only about 2,500 years ago, but new archaeological discoveries have shown Paleo-Eskimos have inhabited Greenland for at least 4,500 years and maybe much more.

This new research on Inupiat DNA has provided strong evidence that the earliest Inuit peoples, as well as the Paleo-Eskimos, came from Alaska. Where they came from before then is anyone's guess.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/29/frozen-garden-eden-research-says-inuit-came-alaskas-north-slope-160534>

Chief Justice says Canada attempted 'cultural genocide' on aboriginals

SEAN FINE - JUSTICE WRITER

The Globe and Mail

Published Thursday, May. 28 2015, 9:12 PM EDT

Last updated Friday, May. 29 2015, 1:39 PM EDT

Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin says Canada attempted to commit "cultural genocide" against aboriginal peoples, in what she calls the worst stain on Canada's human-rights record.

Genocide – an attempt to destroy a people, in whole or part – is a crime under international law. The United Nations' Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted in 1948, does not use the phrase "cultural genocide," but says genocide may include causing serious mental harm to a group.

Globe and Mail Update May. 29 2015, 1:30 PM EDT

Chief Justice McLachlin appears to be the highest-ranking Canadian official to use the phrase. Former Liberal prime minister Paul Martin used it two years ago in describing residential schools for aboriginal children when he testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up by the Conservative government. That commission is to make its report public next week.

“The most glaring blemish on the Canadian historic record relates to our treatment of the First Nations that lived here at the time of colonization,” Chief Justice McLachlin said. She was delivering the fourth annual Pluralism Lecture of the Global Centre for Pluralism, founded in 2006 by the Aga Khan, spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims, and the federal government.

After an initial period of inter-reliance and equality, she said Canada developed an “ethos of exclusion and cultural annihilation.”

“The objective – I quote from Sir John A. Macdonald, our revered forefather – was to ‘take the Indian out of the child,’ and thus solve what was referred to as the Indian problem. ‘Indianness’ was not to be tolerated; rather it must be eliminated. In the buzz-word of the day, assimilation; in the language of the 21st century, cultural genocide.” She made clear that this treatment extended well into the 20th century.

John Borrows, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law at the University of Victoria, called the Chief Justice’s use of the term “unparalleled” in Canadian history.

He said the term is unlikely to have legal consequences, but carries symbolic importance coming from the Chief Justice. “A lot of indigenous people and other people have been asking for that word to be part of our vocabulary because it does more fully communicate the weight of what happened.”

Peter Russell, a political science professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, said that Chief Justice McLachlin shares with virtually all Supreme Court judges since a landmark rights case in 1990 “a tremendous sense of sorrow about the denial of very fundamental rights to Canada’s native people.”

Chief Justice McLachlin, who has been on the court since 1989 and chief since 2000, is its longest-serving chief justice. She cited early laws barring treaty Indians from leaving reservations, rampant starvation and disease and the denial of the right to vote.

She also pointed to the outlawing of aboriginal religious and social traditions, such as the potlatch and the sun dance, and to residential schools, in which children who had been taken from their parents “were forbidden to speak their native languages, forced to wear white man’s clothing, forced to observe Christian religious practices and sometimes subjected to sexual abuse.

The objective was to ‘take the Indian out of the child,’ and thus to solve what John A. Macdonald referred to as the ‘Indian problem.’”

Chief Justice McLachlin authored the court’s unanimous ruling last June that legal observers called the most important aboriginal-rights decision in Canadian history. The court determined that native Canadians still own their ancestral lands, unless they signed away their ownership in treaties with government. While they do not retain absolute control, the ruling gives them enormous leverage in negotiations with outside parties that

wish to develop their lands. The court granted title to the Tsilhqot'in Nation to an area more than half the size of greater Vancouver, though only 400 people lived there when the British Crown asserted its sovereignty in 1846.

In her speech, she said Canada had learned from its mistakes, and she cited Prime Minister Stephen Harper's 2008 apology to aboriginal peoples for the abuses of the residential schools.

The event was held in partnership with The Globe and Mail.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/chief-justice-says-canada-attempted-cultural-genocide-on-aboriginals/article24688854/>

Edmonton school kids following footsteps of first Aboriginal police officer

By [Slav Kornik](#) Web Producer Global News, June 1, 2015 12:01 pm



Alex Decoteau was Canada's first Aboriginal police officer.

EDMONTON — Edmonton police are hosting a run for over 200 school kids to commemorate Canada's first Aboriginal police officer, as part of National Aboriginal History Month.

Monday's annual run is an appropriate commemoration for Alex Decoteau, who was not only an Edmonton police officer but an Olympic runner. He competed in the 1912 Olympic Games, and is considered one of Canada's greatest marathon runners.



Courtesy City of Edmonton Archives

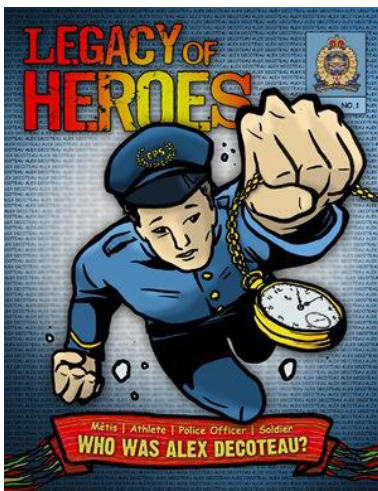
“We want to encourage youth to have the same dedication and healthy lifestyle as Alex Decoteau, so they can run faster toward their goals and play a more positive role in their community,” said Const. Lisa Wolfe, Edmonton Police Service Recruiting Unit.

“For many Aboriginal police members, his legacy has been an inspiration, and we want others to continue to follow in his footsteps and consider a career in policing.”

The run also helps promote physical fitness. The students will run a three-kilometer route.

Decoteau was born on the Red Pheasant Indian Reserve in Saskatchewan on Nov. 19, 1887. He moved to Edmonton 1909 and joined the Edmonton Police Service two years later. He made Sergeant in 1914. In 1916, he enlisted with the Canadian Army, and served until his death in the battle at Passchendaele, Belgium, in Oct. 1917.

In 2014, a new downtown park and new southeast residential area in Edmonton were named in honour of Decoteau.



Edmonton police have also released the [Alex Decoteau Legacy of Heroes Comic Book](#), the first in a series created to tell the stories of the people and events that are part of the police service's history.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2028871/edmonton-school-kids-following-footsteps-of-first-aboriginal-police-officer/>

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Not having all the answers: Caring for our stories through the burden of representation

By
[Samantha Nock](#)
| June 1, 2015



I am a collection of events. I am an amalgamation of decisions and stories. I am here because of the actions of others who have lived and loved, and somewhere in their existence my narratives were being created. I was given this life to live because of the actions of my ancestors.

Living with these stories in my bones means that I share a connection with those who are also a part of these stories: my family, my community and others that are a part of these actions, who have been entwined with a shared existence since time immemorial. This means that within our being, we are the keepers of our stories. We are the protectors of the most personal parts of our being on this earth, each and every one of us.

As a Metis woman my existence, somehow or another, is often political. It is because of this politicization of Indigenous existence that these stories we carry within us are treated as though they are public knowledge. These things that create me, knowledge, love, trauma, stories, and teachings, become an archive for curious settlers to exploit. Along

with everything else I carry with me as a Metis woman, I also carry this awkward burden of representation.

Often when I'm among acquaintances or sometimes even close friends, I feel like I'm supposed to be some sort of encyclopedia for people to ask questions to. There have been times I have sat aghast at how personal these questions are, how they are tied to this barometer of trauma I am supposed to exude in order for the questioner to feel satisfied in their new knowledge of Indigenous existence.

It was just the other day that someone asked me, point blank, if my family had been traumatized by the Residential School system and in what ways did I feel this presented itself in my family. I gave a very vague answer about intergenerational trauma that survivor families' feel and left it at that. I could tell by my questioners demeanour that this was not the answer they were looking for. They wanted me to bare all, to let them hear these particular experiences and stories that are inside me. Time and time again, I have been asked personal and often triggering questions about my history or events that have happened in the news with little to no regard of what toll these conversations will have on me or listeners in the room. You never know who is listening.

At the end of the day, sometimes I feel guilty for not answering questions in full. Sometimes I feel guilty refusing to answer questions, because I feel this immense pressure to try and alleviate so much of the everyday lack of knowledge individuals have about Indigenous peoples, to the best of my abilities. But it is exhausting. I can only speak for myself and my experiences, but from the conversation I have had with other Indigenous folks, this pressure has a common place.

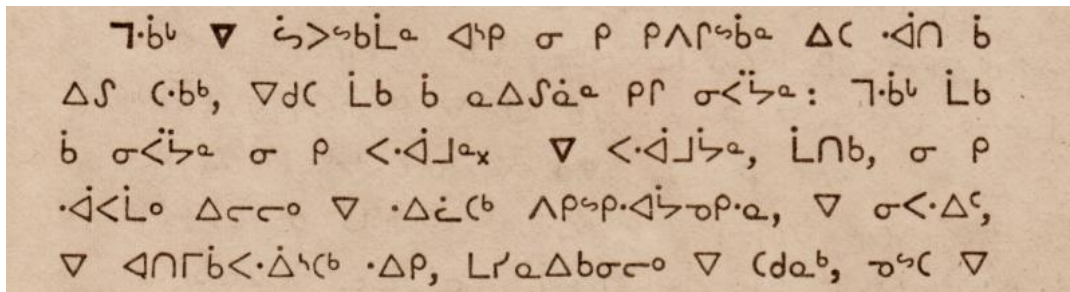
I never want to discourage conversation or the sharing of knowledge. I never want to dampen curiosity. But I want to encourage spaces for these conversations to happen in a good way. I want our stories to be treated with respect. I want all that creates me to be treated gently, because the histories that are so wrapped up in our collective existence hold so much. Probing questions and the push for us to be representatives for all Indigenous people leaves us in a very vulnerable and powerless space. It disrespects everything that has brought us up to this moment. It disregards all our ancestors' decisions that created us because it disrespects our boundaries and our power to choose what stories we want to share and what we do not want to share.

All we are are stories, and it is important that we have the power to choose what stories we tell to strangers, what stories we only share with those we love, and what stories are only meant to be told to ourselves. We give away a piece of ourselves when we share our stories to the people we are telling them too. We become a part of them and they become a part of us because we have now shared this moment, we have now been implicated in a new relationship. It is because of this, because we only have so much of ourselves to give, that we need to protect what we have.

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/samantha-nock/2015/06/not-having-all-answers-caring-our-stories-through-burden-repres>

Readers Can Now Enjoy Little Red Riding Hood and Other Fairy Tales in the Cree Language

Posted [2 June 2015](#) 14:50 GMT



Scan of a page of the Cree translation of Pilgrim's Progress published in 1886. Courtesy – Kevin Brousseau.

Storytelling plays an important role in cultures around the world, helping to pass knowledge from generation to generation. The universality of this tradition is reflected in the similarities of the central themes and characters in some stories across cultures and languages. Thanks to the power of translation, tales from one part of the world can find their way into the homes of families on the other side of the world.

Blogger and Cree language digital activist [Kevin Brousseau](#) noticed that traditional Cree stories had been translated into English, but not the other way around as other well-known stories were not available in Cree. He said in an interview with Rising Voices:

After translating the Little Red Riding Hood and Hansel and Gretel, I realized that elderly monolingual speakers of Cree had never heard of these stories! As I read my stories to my elderly grandmother, I was struck by how much she enjoyed them, but also how closely these stories resembled Cree stories once they were read aloud in Cree.

So began his desire to make these popular stories available to more people through his blog [Cree Language](#). So far, Brousseau has translated popular fairy tales such as Goldilocks and the Three Little Pigs, as well as some of [Aesop's Fables](#) in both the Southern East Cree and Moose Cree dialects.



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Screenshot of the first part of Little Red Riding Hood translated into Southern East Cree by Kevin Brousseau

[Cree](#) is the most widely spoken native language in Canada, and is comprised of various dialects. It is an official language of the Northwest Territories, and recognized as a minority language in five provinces. According to the 2006 Canadian Census, there are approximately 120,000 speakers across the different dialects.

On his blog, he also writes original stories in the Cree language, translates into and from the Cree language, and shares insight about the language's grammar, dialects, lexicon, and the various orthographies. When he is not blogging, he works as the Cree Language Coordinator for the Cree Nation Government in Quebec.

When it comes to its presence on the Internet, Kevin has noticed that the Cree language has significantly increased online over the past few years, but Cree citizen media is “still in its infancy.” In addition to his blog, he cites various online projects that are working to promote the language, such as [Cree Literacy](#), a network that promotes Cree language and cultural literacy. Another blog called [âpihtawikosisân](#) is written by a Plains Cree-speaking Métis woman living in Montreal. [Little Cree Books](#) is an online project that seeks to publish free texts in the Plains Cree dialect, all of which are available under a Creative Commons license.

On social media, there are several Facebook groups that share [resources](#), [teach basic words or phrases](#), or act as a [space where people can communicate](#) in the Cree language. And on Twitter, the hashtags [#speakcree](#) and [#nêhiyawêtan](#) can be found from time to time. Kevin himself tweets at [@_Kepin](#) sharing encouraging words to others wanting to share the language.

Despite this increase in the availability of content in different dialects of the Cree language, communities still face challenges especially when it comes to the unique writing, also called [syllabics](#), in the language on the web. He said:

There are whole sets of characters that simply do not display properly if the website does not support the appropriate fonts. That is definitely a problem for bloggers such as

myself. Although the proper fonts are selected as I draft my posts, another person's computer may lack the fonts and as a result my blog will simply not display properly on his or her computer. This is a nuisance that often keeps people from even attempting to write in Cree online.

The relatively low numbers of people that read and write in the language is one of the major challenges, but the increase in the number of online resources and content can help encourage more people to explore communicating in the Cree language.

Overall, response to the year-old blog has been positive. The blog primarily focuses on the written language, and in comparison to some Cree language sites, Kevin primarily writes in the language, instead of writing about the language. As a result, the audience for written Cree is still relatively low due to the low number of Cree-literate Internet users. However, he hopes to add more multimedia to the project through audio clips. He cites one example of how the translations found on his blog are now being used for educational purposes:

A lady from a neighbouring community was pretty excited about my Cree translation of the 3 Little Pigs and asked if she could use it in her community as a teaching resource. My hope is that more people take an interest in learning how to read our language – in the meantime, my blog will keep growing.

Direct Link: <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2015/06/02/readers-can-now-enjoy-little-red-riding-hood-and-other-fairy-tales-in-the-cree-language/>

Five Montreal homeless shelters to offer seal meat to Inuit clients



Seal meat offered at the Native Friendship Centre.

CTV Montreal

Published Wednesday, June 3, 2015 10:23PM EDT

Last Updated Thursday, June 4, 2015 7:32AM EDT

Some homeless shelters in Montreal are serving up something familiar to their Inuit clients – seal meat.

It is on the menu at the Open Door, the Native Friendship Centre and the St. Michael Mission, Chez Doris and the Aboriginal Projects of Quebec.

Once in Montreal, many Inuit people are not used to certain foods. Organizers say it's a way to respect Inuit traditions.

The five shelters receive a frozen shipment every month, thanks to the Makivik Society, a group that represents some 10,000 Inuit people from Quebec and Canada.

There is only one government-certified supplier of seal meat in Quebec.

Direct Link: <http://montreal.ctvnews.ca/five-montreal-homeless-shelters-to-offer-seal-meat-to-inuit-clients-1.2405678>

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

Inuit employment with the GN stalled at 50 per cent

Growth in Inuit jobs persists in low-level positions like admin

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, June 02, 2015 - 11:55 am



According to the latest human resource capacity report released by the Nunavut government, overall capacity remains at 75 per cent and of those people who work for Nunavut's public service, only half are Inuit. (PHOTO BY THOMAS ROHNER)

While Inuit employment in the Nunavut public service has improved slightly overall since 1999 — from 44 per cent of those employed in government to 50 per cent in 2014 — in some departments, Inuit job holders have declined.

According to statistics on employment filed at regular intervals by the Government of Nunavut, Inuit employment has dropped within the departments of Culture and Heritage, Community and Government Services and the Office of the Legislative Assembly.

If you look at where Inuit are employed, numbers are rising in the lower paying jobs — administrative support and paraprofessional — but the number of Inuit in higher level jobs are decreasing — at the executive level, for example, and in professional categories.

Since the creation of Nunavut, the GN has been publishing [regular reports](#) called “Towards a Representative Public Service.”

It is obliged to do so under Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement which states that the government must work towards a workforce that represents the proportion of Inuit who live in the territory — about 85 per cent.

According to the latest statistics from December 2014 and tabled in the legislature last week, of the 3,413 people employed within the GN public service, half are Inuit. That’s just slightly above what it was when the territory was created after 1999.

In term of capacity overall, the GN had 1,116 vacancies across all departments, agencies, boards and corporations as of the end of 2014.

The education department had the highest capacity with 89 per cent of its positions filled. The lowest was the health department which had a 39 per cent vacancy rate.

A couple of other departments and arms of government were doing well in keeping bodies at desks last year. Departments with top capacity included:

- Education: 89 per cent
- Qulliq Energy Corporation: 85 per cent
- Nunavut Arctic College: 81 per cent
- Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs: 79 per cent
- Office of the Legislative Assembly: 77 per cent
- Finance: 77 per cent
- Environment: 76 per cent

Departments operating at below average capacity included:

- Health: 61 per cent
- Family Services: 66 per cent
- Justice: 69 per cent
- Economic Development and Transportation: 70 per cent.

Statistics are also broken down by community.

The communities with the highest capacity are Grise Fiord and Kugaaruk, both of which were sitting at 91 per cent by year end 2014. Cambridge Bay, which had a 35 per cent vacancy rate, had the lowest capacity across the territory. Pangnirtung was next, with 30 per cent government staff vacancy.

Of the regions, Kivalliq had the highest rate of Inuit employment, with 59 per cent, followed by Kitikmeot, with 53 per cent, and Baffin, with 45 per cent.

It's also interesting to note that of the four GN positions located in Ottawa, there were no vacancies.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit_employment_with_the_gn_stalled_at_50_per_cent/

Inuit still less than 25% of all managers in Nunavut government

New leadership strategy coming, says deputy minister of Finance

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 03, 2015 5:43 AM CT Last Updated: Jun 03, 2015 5:43 AM CT



Inuit employment in the Government of Nunavut remains at 50 per cent, according to December 2014 numbers released by the territory's Department of Finance. In Iqaluit, Inuit made up 35 per cent of Government of Nunavut employees. (The Canadian Press)

Inuit employment in the Government of Nunavut remains at 50 per cent overall, according to December 2014 numbers released by the territory's Department of Finance.

That number falls short of reflecting Nunavut's population, which is 85 per cent Inuit, but the real shortcomings are in middle and senior management, where Inuit hold less than a quarter of all jobs.

The Sivuliqtiksat Program, which provides on-the-job training for beneficiaries who want to work in management, has been in place since 2001.

Ronnie Suluk, manager of Community Mining and Engagement in Arviat, went through the program, like his mother before him.

Suluk says three years in the internship program played a big part in where he is today, "with a lot of help from my co-workers and my supervisor who were able to take their time and ensure that I get the whole thing down on how the industry and government works," he said.

"Now I think I have a good future with the GN."

The most recent report says the program has a total of 16 positions available, 10 of which are filled.

Overall, 75 per cent of the Government of Nunavut's available jobs were staffed in December 2014.

Chris D'Arcy, Nunavut's deputy minister of Finance, says the government is doing what it can.

"Inuit employment plans are in effect with each and every department," he said.

"We have the priority hiring policy. We have a new leadership strategy that we are just about to roll out."

He said the new strategy will consist of three-day courses every six to eight weeks for future managers and supervisors. It will include Inuit societal values and last until summer 2016.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/inuit-still-less-than-25-of-all-managers-in-nunavut-government-1.3097819>

Aboriginal Politics

Metis president seeks contempt of court order against vice president

By Betty Ann Adam, The Starphoenix May 29, 2015



President Robert Doucette is asking for a contempt of court order - with a fine or even jail - against vice-president Gerald Morin and 10 members of the Provincial Metis Council (PMC) for failure to comply with an April 6 order by Court of Queen's Bench Justice Robert Scherman that they meet and schedule a provincewide Metis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA).

Saskatchewan Metis leaders are going back to court after failing to meet court-ordered deadlines for meetings that are needed before funding will be reinstated to the Metis Nation - Saskatchewan (MNS).

President Robert Doucette is asking for a contempt of court order - with a fine or even jail - against vice-president Gerald Morin and 10 members of the Provincial Metis Council (PMC) for failure to comply with an April 6 order by Court of Queen's Bench Justice Robert Scherman that they meet and schedule a provincewide Metis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA).

Scherman had ruled in Doucette's favour, saying Morin and his supporters breached their constitutional responsibility to the Metis people of Saskatchewan by failing to meet and schedule an MNLA.

The MNLA is where Metis leaders elected in communities across the province meet to direct the provincial organization.

Failure to hold the twice-yearly assembly resulted in the federal government halting funding to the MNS last October. The organization's activities were shut down and staff laid off, but it has been able to cover office rent so far.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada Minister Bernard Valcourt has said funding would be resumed after an assembly is held.

Email correspondence filed with the court this week showed members of the PMC refusing to participate in a telephone conference to set the MNLA date because they distrust Doucette.

In an interview Thursday, Morin said he would have participated in a conference call but there was no quorum. He later said he would have participated but he ran out of cellphone minutes.

He said there is no point in setting a date for the MNLA if the MNS can't even afford to bring the PMC together for a meeting.

Doucette said the federal government is likely to release \$300,000 it has withheld once the PMC meets - even on the phone - and deals with outstanding business, such as approving last year's financial audits. That money would more than pay for the assembly.

"It would show the federal government there's some willingness on behalf of all the parties to sit together and work. It would allow us to have that (MNLA) that hasn't happened in almost four years in contravention of our rules," Doucette said.

Instead of the teleconference, Morin said he wants the PMC to have its meeting in Calgary on June 5, when the 17-member council is present for the Metis National Council's (MNC) annual meeting. The MNC will cover the cost of their travel there, Morin said.

"We could've got our legal council to get together, could have made friendly amendments to whatever, to Scherman's order and we could have tried to resolve this impasse of having a legislative assembly," he said.

Before returning to Saskatchewan from the MNC meeting, Morin said "the MNS board will have an engagement with TransCanada Pipeline ... and Enbridge," in Calgary on the duty to consult with indigenous people about activity on their traditional lands.

"TransCanada Pipelines will also be, you know, assisting in some way I guess, in order to have that engagement Monday afternoon," Morin said.

Doucette was surprised to hear about that meeting, saying he had not been informed.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/Metis+president+seeks+contempt+court+order+against+vice+president/11092158/story.html>

Voter Card changes non-issue: Minister

Stricter rules criticized

By Janet French, The Starphoenix May 30, 2015

Voters' inability to use their government-distributed information cards as identification in the next federal election is "an insignificant issue," says the minister of democratic reform.

During a stop in Saskatoon on Friday, Pierre Poilievre said the 400,000 Canadians who used the cards to vote in the last federal election were part of a pilot project and are a drop in the bucket of the 25 million Canadians eligible to vote.

"So, as you can see, it's an insignificant issue," Poilievre said. "They will all be able to vote in the next election."

Critics of the Fair Elections Act, passed by the Conservative government last year, say new stricter rules requiring voters to show identification bearing their address could potentially prevent students, seniors and First Nations people from voting.

Many First Nations voters use Indian status cards, which do not include an address, as identification.

The act also eliminates a voter's ability to have a friend or relative vouch for his or her identity at the polls. In the 2011 federal election, more than 120,000 voters had someone vouch for them.

The rule changes are meant to prevent election fraud.

When asked whether those who used a voter card or vouching could vote without identification in the next federal election, likely coming this fall, Poilievre said 87 per cent of Canadians believe a voter should have to show identification to cast a ballot.

"There are a very small number of people who disagree with that, but we're very confident in that position," Poilievre said.

Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas is among the people who disagree.

He says the changes make voting even more difficult for a demographic that already has a low participation rate at the ballot box. "As far as I'm concerned, 400,000 (votes) is not insignificant. One vote is significant in a democracy," Thomas said.

Pilot projects are supposed to lead to more widespread practices, Thomas said, adding he heard no rationale for why it was discontinued.

Eliminating the option of vouching for a voter's identity is particularly troubling, Thomas said.

"The rules should be there to encourage people to vote. Right now what I think we're doing is we're putting some roadblocks for people to vote," Thomas said "We're making it tougher for them to vote, and that's contrary to democracy."

The Council of Canadians has challenged the new rules, filing an application in court for an injunction that would permit voter cards and vouching in the fall election.

Elections expert and former B.C. chief electoral officer Harry Neufeld filed a sworn statement for that case, saying "tens of thousands" of qualified voters could be turned away from the polls with the new rules.

The Saskatoon Tribal Council is planning a pre-election campaign to help its members get ready to vote, including encouragements to get the proper identification in advance.

"We don't vote as much as we should," Thomas said. "We need to find a strategy to get people engaged."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Voter+Card+changes+issue+Minister/11095600/story.html>

Aboriginals should expect more from all their leaders

By [David Akin](#), *Parliamentary Bureau Chief*

First posted: Monday, June 01, 2015 06:55 PM EDT | Updated: Monday, June 01, 2015 07:02 PM EDT



A First Nations protester

OTTAWA - The relationship between the federal government and many of the country's aboriginal communities is not good.

But there is hope that with the release Tuesday of the findings and recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the table will have been set for that relationship to improve. An improving relationship between Ottawa and the country's First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples is vital to reduce the appalling rates of poverty and violence in too many aboriginal communities.

And while the work of the TRC should —quite rightly — provoke a robust response from the federal government, aboriginal leaders must also work to find new ways to deliver results for those they represent.

Indeed, in some ways, the toughest job may now fall to aboriginal leaders because the hard work of bringing about real change — improving, for example, the abysmal 35% graduation rate on First Nations reserves — will mean those leaders will have to convince aboriginal Canadians that yet more time and yet more patience is required.

Those who preach patience Tuesday will do so as the TRC releases a report that will detail how as many as 6,000 aboriginal children — and likely more — died in residential schools over the last century. No less a personage than Supreme Court Justice Beverley McLachlin has characterized this as “cultural genocide” and the TRC report out Tuesday is expected to use the same strong language.

Who could blame aboriginal leaders and their followers if they expressed outrage and impatience? And yet, there was Perry Bellegarde, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, smiling and optimistic as he patiently answered questions from (largely non-native) reporters on Parliament Hill Monday. He believes that the work of the commission — the summary out Tuesday is 300-plus pages with multiple volumes to be published later this year — will not just gather dust on a shelf but will lead to new schools, new homes, and new hope.

“I’m hoping that this time will be different,” Bellegarde said.

The TRC report will give the federal government plenty of direction and plenty of reasons to “be different” this time but the organization Bellegarde now leads — the Assembly of First Nations — must also ask itself if it can do more to be a better partner on behalf of Canada’s First Nations people.

Bellegarde’s predecessor, Shawn Atleo, won a hard-fought \$1.9-billion deal last year with Prime Minister Stephen Harper on education and yet the 600 or so chiefs that elect the AFN national chief were unhappy with it. Atleo’s position became untenable and he quit.

Can Bellegarde deliver where Atleo failed? Can we expect some big transformative agreement from a fractious AFN?

Or should Ottawa do as it has been increasingly doing and strike separate smaller agreements on everything from resource development to fisheries to education with separate treaty organizations and even individual bands?

But, of course, it will fall to Harper Tuesday to demonstrate that, if aboriginal leaders do commit to the hard work on their side of the table, the federal government will not fail them, that Ottawa will take early, concrete steps. There is a broad menu of ‘change’ items from which his government could choose.

Let's not wait until after this year's federal election to get started. Let Harper show that some meaningful steps can be taken now.

Direct Link: <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/06/01/aboriginals-should-expect-more-from-all-their-leaders>

Aboriginal Affairs spending shortfall amounts to \$1B, internal document says

5-year federal analysis of 'lapsed' spending lists top underspending departments

By Dean Beeby, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 05, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 05, 2015 11:26 AM ET



Justice Murray Sinclair, centre, and fellow Truth and Reconciliation commissioners Marie Wilson, right, and Wilton Littlechild discuss their report on Canada's residential school system in Ottawa this week. The report called for more resources for First Nations, even as an internal report suggests Aboriginal Affairs is holding back promised money. (Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press)

The department that delivers programs for Canada's indigenous people has held back more than \$1 billion in promised spending for social services over the last five years.

That significant level of so-called lapsed spending — money promised but never spent — places Aboriginal Affairs among the largest "serial" offenders, that is, key departments that regularly spend less than budgeted in big dollar amounts year after year.

The other "serial" lapsed in a top-seven list compiled by the Privy Council Office failed to spend all their budgeted money for infrastructure and procurement, including National Defence, while Aboriginal Affairs stands out as the only social-service department regularly falling so short of budget.



Advocate Cindy Blackstock has launched a legal challenge, saying First Nation children are not getting their fair share of federal support for education and social services. (CBC)

A heavily censored analysis of lapsing behaviour was obtained by CBC News from the Privy Council Office, the prime minister's department, under the Access to Information Act.

Other social-service departments have made headlines in recent months for significant dollar shortfalls in promised spending, including Veterans Affairs, which has underspent by \$1 billion over a decade and Employment and Social Development Canada, which lapsed almost \$100 million in 2013-14 alone.

But only Aboriginal Affairs — with a budget of about \$8 billion, not all of it discretionary — made the internal list, created Nov. 28 for Privy Council Clerk Janice Charette.

Trend of higher lapses

The Parliamentary Budget Office and others say some lapsed spending is to be expected each year, as programs are delayed, procurement hits snags and construction timelines lengthen. But the internal analysis for Charette says there has been "a trend of higher lapses in recent years," and calls underspending at the top seven departments "significant in magnitude."

In 2012-13, as the government's sweeping deficit-reduction cuts began to bite, total lapsed money hit a record \$10 billion for all departments and agencies, or more than one of every 10 dollars budgeted, the analysis found.

Budgeted dollars not spent are 'significant in magnitude.'— *Internal report for Janice Charette, clerk of the Privy Council*

Before the Conservatives formed government in 2006, annual lapsed spending was steady at about five per cent, but it began to increase sharply in the years following, spiking at more than 10 per cent in 2012-13, the total fell to 7.7 per cent in 2013-14. (The most recent number, for 2014-15, will be reported in the Public Accounts in the fall.)

The calculation excludes federal spending on mandatory programs, such as transfers to the provinces, and includes discretionary spending voted on each year by Parliament.

The analysis says Veterans Affairs is an average lapser, with about five per cent of its budget unspent in recent years, which therefore "demonstrates prudent financial planning" by that department.

The king of the lapers is Infrastructure Canada, with an average of \$1.5 billion unspent each year. The heavily censored document contains an explanation that is mostly blacked out.

Aboriginal Affairs underspends by an average of \$218 million each year.

'Timing issues' cited

A spokeswoman for Aboriginal Affairs took issue with the Privy Council Office analysis, saying most of the lapsed funds are "carried forward" to be used in coming years.

"From 2009-10 until 2013-14, 97.2 per cent of what was marked as lapsed funding in the public accounts has actually been carried forward to future years and spent on a wide range of programs," Valerie Hache said in an email, which did not include any accounting of the rollovers.

"The reprofiling is simply due to timing issues that are common in complex negotiations where a number of parties are involved."

The Privy Council Office analysis concludes that in future years "the existence of a lapse in the five per cent range is likely to persist" across all of government. "Such a result should not be perceived as problematic."

New Democrat MP Niki Ashton, aboriginal affairs critic, said the repeated underspending of millions of dollars is "unconscionable," given the appalling living conditions on reserves today.

"This government chose, in silence, to re-pocket it instead of spending it on people who not just need it but people for whom they have a fiduciary obligation," she said in an interview.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission this week called for significantly more resources to help First Nations survivors of residential schools recover from generations of horrific physical, sexual, emotional and mental abuse at the hands of church and government workers, damaging virtually every indigenous family in Canada. No concrete commitments have been made.

The planned budget for Aboriginal Affairs is to shrink by a billion dollars by 2017-18 from current levels, to \$7 billion, according to the department's fiscal blueprint tabled earlier in the spring.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/aboriginal-affairs-spending-shortfall-amounts-to-1b-internal-document-says-1.3100937?cmp=rss>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Environmental report recommends aboriginal traditional knowledge, more public involvement

Posted: **05/29/2015 11:38 AM**

More public involvement and greater attention to aboriginal traditional knowledge are just two of the recommendations in an in-depth report released today by the Manitoba Law Reform Commission on what the province should do to improve the Environment Act.

The commission offers a number of recommendations to beef up the act that would recognize changing attitudes about the role of environmental assessment and ongoing technological advances.

"The recommendations set out in this report are intended to result in a more contemporary, certain, transparent, and comprehensive framework for environmental assessment and licensing," the commission said in the report's executive summary. "The report also aims to serve an educational purpose and fill some of the informational gaps that currently exist in available sources discussing Manitoba's legal framework."

The full report is [here](#).

The commission recommends that the Manitoba government work in partnership with aboriginal communities to determine the best way to improve the involvement of aboriginal peoples in Manitoba's environmental assessment and licensing process.

That includes the integration of aboriginal traditional knowledge into the decision-making process.

The commission also says the government should work more in partnership with the public, proponents, legal practitioners, aboriginal communities and other interested

parties to develop a strategy and timeline for transitioning Manitoba to a system of sustainability assessment in environmental reviews.

Other recommendations focus on improving the province's environmental assessment and licensing process.

An example is changing the definition of "environment" in section 1(1) of the act.

The commission said it should be amended or replaced with a definition that includes, but is not limited to, a consideration of:

- air, land and water;
- all layers of the atmosphere;
- all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms;
- any building, structure, machine or other device or thing made by humans;
- social, cultural, economic, and aesthetic conditions and factors that influence the life of humans or a community;
- a solid, liquid, gas, odour, heat, sound, vibration, radiation or other produced energy resulting directly or indirectly from the activities of humans; and
- any part or combination of the foregoing and the interrelationships among any two or more of them.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Environmental-report-recommends-aboriginal-traditional-knowledge-more-public-involvement-305479591.html>

Opposition Mounts Against Kinder Morgan Pipeline in Canada as Indigenous People Reject Proposal

By [Hilary Beaumont](#)

May 28, 2015 | 6:25 pm

A First Nation in British Columbia has voted unanimously against a pipeline expansion proposal by Kinder Morgan that would carry at least 300,000 more barrels of bitumen per day from oil-rich Alberta to the BC coast, where it would be available to international markets.

But even without the consent of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN), which has existed in the territory since the last ice age and has never ceded its title, the Canadian government could still approve the proposal.

The First Nation opposes the project on environmental, cultural and legal grounds.

"You can't put a price on the sacred," Rueben George, manager of the TWN Sacred Trust, told VICE News over the phone from BC Wednesday.

"Our name Tsleil-Waututh means 'People of the Inlet' because as our story of creation, we are direct descendants of the water. We're direct descendants of the water we're surrounded with in Vancouver: the Burrard Inlet. We believe, and how I am taught, [is] that the water is sacred."

The project would increase the likelihood of oil spills in the Burrard Inlet, concluded a TWN report informed by six experts. "Because spilled oil cannot be cleaned up completely, the consequences in such circumstances will be dire for sensitive sites, habitat and species," the band council said in its resolution.

A worst-case oil spill could kill as many as 500,000 birds, the report said, and fumes from a spill could make one million people around Burrard Inlet sick. In turn any spills would also negatively affect the nation's economy and cultural activities.

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson also reacted to scathing city-commissioned analysis, released this week, on the proposed project.

"Today we heard overwhelming evidence that the Kinder Morgan pipeline proposal and the oil tankers associated with it are incredibly disastrous for Vancouver," [he told reporters Wednesday](#).

[The TWN band council argues](#) the Trans Mountain proposal isn't the best use of the land and, "has the potential to deprive past, current and future generations of Tsleil-Waututh peoples of control and benefit of the water, land, air and resources."

The Kinder Morgan proposal contradicts TWN's stewardship policy, which holds that the First Nation has a responsibility to protect the water, air and land. TWN's Treaty, Lands and Resources Department said in its report the proposal would "violate Tsleil-Waututh law because it will undermine our stewardship obligations."

The stewardship policy was enacted in 2009 and is based on traditional Tsleil-Waututh teachings.

If it goes forward, Kinder Morgan's proposed \$5.4 billion expansion would allow between 300,000 and 890,000 additional barrels of oil to flow from Alberta to the BC coast each day.

On December 16, 2013, Kinder Morgan filed its Trans Mountain proposal with Canada's energy regulator, the National Energy Board (NEB). The NEB will consider all the evidence it receives for and against the project and will send a recommendation on the project to the federal government in January 2016. If the federal government approves the project, [the company says](#) construction could begin in 2016 with the pipeline operational by 2018.

In an emailed statement, Kinder Morgan spokesperson Ali Hounsell said "for more than 60 years petroleum products have been safely shipped through the Burrard Inlet."

But an oil spill in English Bay, which is the same body of water the Burrard Inlet borders, [drew massive public outcry in April](#). Though the spill was relatively small, [Vancouver's city manager](#) said the oil spread quickly and was found at a city park as many as 12 kilometers away.

"Since our project was announced Trans Mountain has attempted to have multiple discussions with the [sic] Tseil Waututh First Nation and with the release of this new report," Hounsell also said in a statement. "[W]e once again invite the [sic] Tseil-Waututh First Nation to come to the table."

Asked if Kinder Morgan attempted to consult with the nation, and whether any consultation between the company and TWN had happened since they submitted their proposal in December 2013, Hounsell replied, "that's correct. They have accepted our offer to meet."

However, Rueben George, the TWN representative, told VICE News his nation would "never" consult with Kinder Morgan because they were not the proper consulting body. The Crown is the proper consulting body, he said.

VICE News asked Kinder Morgan communications about this discrepancy, and they replied that it was a typo and that TWN had not accepted their offer to meet.

Wednesday was the deadline for intervenors, including the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, to file evidence and concerns with the NEB. Intervenors are any person or group that the NEB agrees is directly affected by, or has relevant information about, a certain proposal.

NEB spokesperson Tara O'Donovan said Wednesday 35 Aboriginal intervenors had submitted oral traditional evidence with the board about the Trans Mountain expansion.

When the National Energy Board finishes its report on the Trans Mountain expansion in January 2016, it will send its recommendation to the federal government, which has the last say on whether the proposal goes forward.

As O'Donovan explained over the phone, the NEB's report is "never cut and dried with a yes or a no"—it's usually a rationale mixed with conditions.

She pointed to the Northern Gateway pipeline as an example of a controversial project the federal government eventually approved. The NEB originally approved the Enbridge proposal, but they also attached 209 conditions.

"Our number one priority is the safety of the public and the protection of the environment," O'Donovan said. "So we will conduct a thorough and fair environmental

assessment, and we will do everything we can to achieve that goal of safety of the public and protection of the environment."

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation, meanwhile, says it has been waiting for two years for the federal government to consult with it on Trans Mountain, to no avail.

And although the nation has jurisdiction over the land and their laws are part of the Canadian common law system, their lawyer Scott Smith told VICE News they don't have final say on whether the pipeline expansion happens.

It's an issue that could end up in the courts. In the landmark [Tsilhqot'in First Nation land claim case](#) last June, the Supreme Court of Canada said if the Crown proceeds without consent, and title is established, then the Crown may have to cancel the project.

Rueben George says his nation is willing to mount a legal challenge if Trans Mountain is ultimately approved.

"By any means necessary, we're going to stop [the pipeline]," he said.

Direct Link: <https://news.vice.com/article/opposition-mounts-against-kinder-morgan-pipeline-in-canada-as-indigenous-people-reject-proposal>

Baffin Bay Seismic Testing Put on Hold Pending Inuit Court Outcome

[ICTMN Staff](#)

5/30/15

The Inuit have yet to get a court decision on their attempt to stop underwater seismic testing, but it came as good news this week that the two companies attempting to map the sea floor using sonar have opted out for this year.

It's a process that one scientist has described as like "dynamite going off in your neighborhood every ten to twelve seconds for weeks or months on end." It involves shooting compacted air to the ocean floor through sonic cannons generating sound waves that help map oil and gas reserves under the seabed. But the sounds, 100,000 times louder than a jet engine, can deafen—and thus kill—marine mammals. The tests were due to start on July 1.

The Inuit had appealed the 2014 decision by Canada's National Energy Board to let the testing go ahead, even in the face of potential harm to marine life. While the companies didn't give reasons for their postponement, the lawyer for the plaintiffs, Nader Hasan, said that doing so would respect the court process. The case was heard on April 20.

Besides threatening marine life, the testing can interfere with narwhal migration and compromise Inuit subsistence hunting rights. Now that hunt can continue this season unimpeded.

“It brought a sigh of relief to me and it means we can spend the summer still narwhal hunting without any migration problems with the whales,” Clyde River Mayor Jerry Natanine told the [Nunatsiag News](#). “It means a lot to me because it means a lot to the people.”

“Justice is on our side,” Natanine said. “We’re going to win this case.”

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/30/baffin-bay-seismic-testing-put-hold-pending-inuit-court-outcome-160548>

'Super fund' needed to cover mine disasters, First Nations' report says



Contents from a tailings pond is pictured going down the Hazeltine Creek into Quesnel Lake near the town of Likely, B.C. on August, 5, 2014. (Jonathan Hayward / The Canadian Press)

Dirk Meissner, The Canadian Press

Published Wednesday, June 3, 2015 7:32AM EDT

Last Updated Wednesday, June 3, 2015 7:42PM EDT

VICTORIA -- A mining organization representing British Columbia's First Nations says companies should bankroll an emergency fund to cover the cost of potential mine disasters similar to last summer's Mount Polley tailings dam collapse.

However, an industry spokeswoman says mine owners are already required by law to pay disaster and cleanup costs.

The B.C. First Nations Energy and Mining Council released a report Wednesday saying mining operations threaten more than 230 northern aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities and even the drinking water in Prince George, Terrace and Smithers.

Thirty-five tailings ponds at 26 mines and in 48 watersheds could also impact nearly 8,700 kilometres of fish-bearing waters, said the report by the North Vancouver-based council.

Dave Porter, the council's chief executive officer, said First Nations analyzed and surveyed mine tailings ponds following last year's Mount Polley mine disaster near Likely, in central B.C.

Porter said the report calls for improved emergency measures, which should involve companies funding a response team during a mining catastrophe.

"Any mining company that operates in B.C. should be required to post funding contributions to the establishment of a super fund," he said, adding it should be more than \$200 million.

Mining Association of BC president Karina Brino said mining laws in the province require companies to post bonds and securities to cover reclamation and emergency costs. Mine owners are also liable for their properties, she said.

"You need to demonstrate to the government that you are going to be able to respond, financially, if there is an issue at your site," Brino said.

Porter said the report is not anti-mining.

"Absolutely not. That's not the position of our organization. We're not saying 'No' to mining. What we're saying is we've got to mine better."

Porter said the report should serve as a resource to help communities understand the risks associated with tailings dams.

"It is not intended to imply that all of the tailings facilities analyzed will at some point fail," the report said. "Rather, it is meant to provide a comprehensive summary of potential threats from future tailings facility failures in northern B.C."

An independent, government-ordered report concluded in January that an inadequately designed dam caused 24 million cubic metres of silt and water to spill into nearby lakes and rivers from the Mount Polley open-pit, copper and gold mine owned by Imperial Metals Corp. (TSX:III),

The report found the dam didn't account for drainage and erosion failures associated with glacial till beneath the pond.

Al Hoffman, B.C.'s chief inspector of mines, said the government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the independent panel report.

Hoffman said in a statement that he has already required B.C.'s operating mines to provide letters by June 30 confirming the structure of their tailings ponds, including understanding of their strength.

B.C. is also moving to establish independent tailings dam review boards.

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/super-fund-needed-to-cover-mine-disasters-first-nations-report-says-1.2403957>

First Nations mining group calls for 'super fund' to cover tailings-dam disasters

By DIRK MEISSNER, THE CANADIAN PRESS June 3, 2015



An aerial view of the damage caused by a tailings pond breach near the town of Likely, B.C., last August. The pond stored toxic waste from the Mount Polley Mine.

VICTORIA — A mining organization representing B.C. First Nations wants companies to bankroll an emergency fund that will cover the cost of disasters similar to last summer's Mount Polley tailings dam collapse.

The North Vancouver-based B.C. First Nations Energy and Mining Council states in a 42-page report released Wednesday that mining operations threaten more than 230 northern aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities and even the drinking water of Prince George, Terrace and Smithers.

The report, *Uncertainty Upstream: Potential Threats from Tailings Facility Failures in Northern British Columbia*, states that 35 tailing ponds at 26 mines and in 48 watersheds could also impact 8,678 kilometres of fish-bearing waters.

Dave Porter, the mining council's chief executive officer, says First Nations analyzed and surveyed mine-tailings ponds following last August's incident at the Mount Polley mine near Likely in central B.C.

He says the report calls for improved emergency measures, which should involve companies funding a response team.

"It is now time for us to talk about a super fund," he says.

"Any mining company that operates in B.C. should be required to post funding contributions to the establishment of a super fund, and the purpose of that fund would be able to resource an emergency response once a catastrophe like this happens."

He says the fund should be more than \$200 million.

Porter also says the report is not anti-mining.

"Absolutely not," he says. "That's not the position of our organization. We're not saying 'no' to mining. What we're saying is we've got to mine better."

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Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/business/First+Nations+mining+group+calls+super+fund+c+over+tailings+disasters/11105627/story.html>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Opposition Mounts Against Kinder Morgan Pipeline in Canada as Indigenous People Reject Proposal

By [Hilary Beaumont](#)

May 28, 2015 | 6:25 pm

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First Nations staking their claims in the B.C. economy

Court victories have driven monumental shift in economic goals

By Gordon Hoekstra and Larry Pynn, Vancouver Sun May 30, 2015

When the Tahltan agreed in a 2011 referendum to support the Northwest Transmission Line that now runs north from Terrace, they knew their lives would change forever.

The 344-kilometre power line would open up a vast, relatively untouched region of northwestern B.C. to hydroelectric projects and large-scale mines.

A century before, in 1910, the Tahltan had declared they were the sovereign owners of a vast area three times the size of Vancouver Island. And although they are vehement about protecting the region they call the “sacred headwaters” — the beginnings of the salmon-rich Skeena, Stikine and Nass rivers — they are now also keen to be active participants in the provincial economy.

“Government and industry understand that the First Nations people need to benefit when these things are built,” says Tahltan Central Council president Chad Day. “But with the Tahltan, it actually makes a lot of business sense to partner with us because we have the capacity, we have the work ethic, we have the experience.”

The Tahltan now share in the wealth created by economic development through revenue-sharing and benefit agreements with the B.C. government, as well as companies such as Calgary-based AltaGas on three hydroelectric projects and Vancouver-based Imperial Metals on the Red Chris gold and copper mine.

Their experience exemplifies a larger story sweeping British Columbia.

It is often an untold story, one hidden behind the headlines about First Nations opposition to Enbridge’s Northern Gateway oil pipeline in northern B.C., or Taseko’s New Prosperity gold and copper mine in the central Interior.

And it shows that despite a failed treaty-making process — only five treaties have been completed in the past three decades — First Nations are choosing to participate, and wield increasing influence, in the B.C. economy.

As recently as 20 years ago, there were only a handful of industry agreements being signed in the salmon-farming sector, or for minor mining and forestry projects. But a landslide of revenue-sharing and benefit deals with government, Crown corporations and companies have been reached in the past decade, in resource-rich areas of the province as well as in urban areas such as the Lower Mainland.

Progress came rapidly following the B.C. Liberal government's philosophical change of heart in 2005 — one year after a landmark Haida Nation court victory on a consult-and-accommodate case. That led to calls for a “new relationship” with First Nations, and marked the beginning of the province sharing resource revenues with First Nations, the first province to do so in Canada.

The number of these agreements — which already total in the hundreds — is expected to grow significantly. And the value of these deals with the province and industry — some are still prospective, as with the nascent liquefied natural gas export sector — amounts to billions of dollars.

A database of more than 300 agreements compiled by The Vancouver Sun — with a total value of more than \$6 billion, including cash already paid out and future revenues over the life of the deals — shows how widespread and diverse they are. And it is likely that this dollar amount is nowhere near the actual total since companies and First Nations typically keep financial details of their agreements confidential.

Even looking at individual deals, the amount of money is substantial. In the Northern Interior, the McLeod Lake Indian Band is expected to claim royalties of between \$35 million and \$40 million over the 15-year life of Thompson Creek Metal's Mount Milligan gold and copper mine. The Nak'azdli will share an additional \$24 million in royalties from the mine.

In the Lower Mainland, the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh last year negotiated a 50-per-cent stake in a federal land deal that includes the Jericho military lands valued at \$300 million. Once developed, estimates peg the Jericho real estate at \$3 billion.

And the Tahltan expect to receive \$2.36 billion in benefits during the next 60 years from the three AltaGas run-of-river projects for agreements covering revenue-sharing from the province and company, contracts, ownership and upfront payments. Community members have been told another \$78 million could flow from the Red Chris mine.

Greg McDade, a Vancouver lawyer who negotiates deals on behalf of First Nations in areas such as mining, pipelines and LNG, says the growing financial might of B.C. First Nations is a big, “untold” story.

“The kinds of numbers we're talking about in these negotiations are big, a whole order of magnitude different than we were talking about even five years ago,” he told The Sun.

This new-found economic power has significant implications for First Nations that hope to reduce unemployment, boost training and education, increase decision-making control over land and resources, and create wealth for their communities.

Former Tsawwassen chief Kim Baird calls it a seismic shift — managing wealth instead of managing poverty.

It means new revenues into community coffers, which have traditionally relied on government handouts.

For the Squamish First Nation — which has a foot in both urban and resource-rich areas — a growing portion of their \$67.1 million in revenues in 2014 originates with their own enterprises and partnerships.

Chief Ian Campbell hopes to see that figure grow to \$200 million over the next decade.

The Squamish are looking to expand development on reserve lands, and are conducting an environmental assessment for Woodfibre LNG, a project that could bring the band long-term revenues of \$100 million.

Campbell said he supports the creation of a corporate arm that would follow the goals of an elected council but could make independent investment decisions. “We’re at a critical point in our development, creating more of a separation of the business and politics,” he said.

All this progress was only made possible because of a mounting number of court victories in favour of First Nations and against the provincial and federal governments.

The latest historic ruling came a year ago and granted the Xeni Gwet’in of the Nemiah Valley — a Tsilqot’in Nation — title to 1,750 square kilometres of its traditional territory in the Interior. The court win was a first in Canada, and pushed the obligations of government for consultation and accommodation of First Nations to a higher threshold.

The architect of that game-changing lawsuit, Xeni Gwet’in chief Roger William, looks at even more recent developments, including a recent \$1.15-billion LNG offer by Pacific NorthWest LNG to the Lax Kw’alaams: “Things are changing. Before our title win, I don’t think that kind of offer would be on the table.”

What is clear is that a company’s best chance for success is to first reach agreements with natives before going to the province with a project proposal.

“If you don’t get consent, and you get challenged in court, the chances are you’re going to lose,” William said.

And it is clear that First Nations will continue to reserve the right to say no to some resource developments — as the Tahltan did when they successfully fought plans by

Shell to extract coal-bed methane gas in an area they considered sacred, or their recent opposition to Fortune Minerals' proposed coal mine.

Despite the significant long-term value in these deals, resistance can be firm, as was shown earlier this month when Lax Kw'alaams First Nation members voted against the \$1.15-billion LNG offer due to environmental concerns.

There are critics of the growing influence of First Nations.

Former Port Edward town councillor and trucking company owner Murray Kristoff believes the province is creating unrealistic expectations among First Nations, and worries about their power to stall or veto development projects.

He is angry that the Lax Kw'alaams rejection of the LNG package could have a significant negative effect on a project that would have brought significant benefits to Port Edward.

"When I cast my vote ... for (Premier) Christy Clark, I didn't vote for the Lax Kw'alaams government. They weren't on the ballot. How come they are calling the shots?" Kristoff asks.

Still, for every project being held up by First Nations opposition, there are many more examples of successful partnerships.

Business Council of B.C. executive vice-president Jock Finlayson says his organization is nervous about growing aboriginal expectations and whether the cost of reaching agreements could make some projects financially unfeasible, but generally the council supports more involvement by natives in the economy through revenue-sharing and impact-benefit deals, and sees the relationship with First Nations improving.

"I think there are ways over time where we can potentially move to make this a bit of a competitive advantage for B.C.," said Finlayson. "I am struck that we are getting more done here jointly with First Nations in more of a 'kind-of partnership' fashion than has been typically seen in other parts of the country where they have treaties." (B.C. is unique among Canadian provinces because few historic treaties were signed with First Nations.)

As the B.C. government's court losses mounted, Victoria has tried to track a path that will not halt economic development. While stating that First Nations do not have a de facto veto on development, the province says it views revenue-sharing as a way to unleash economic potential and has been encouraging that approach to deal-making.

The Supreme Court in the Tsilqot'in case noted that once aboriginal title is established, the Constitution permits incursions on it only for a "compelling and substantial public purpose" consistent with the Crown's fiduciary duty to aboriginals.

A PricewaterhouseCoopers report from 2009 estimated settling treaties with First Nations — and reducing uncertainty on the land base, a similar role played by revenue revenue-sharing and urban land settlements — would boost the economy by more than \$10 billion.

“I guess, if push came to shove, the province could still move a project forward (despite First Nations opposition). But it’s obviously much better if we could do this by working with the First Nations,” says John Rustad, B.C.’s Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation.

The province has shared more than \$450 million in revenues with First Nations since 2003, according to government figures. These payouts are increasing each year, but at about \$60 million last year, the First Nation take amounts to about 0.1 per cent of the province’s \$45 billion in annual revenues.

“It’s a small investment that can make a real difference for First Nations, get them engaged in the economy, and change some of those socio-economic numbers. But at the same time, it can make a huge difference in economic growth and activity in British Columbia,” said Rustad.

Companies and Crown corporations that do business in B.C. say there is little doubt having to consult and reach agreements with First Nations for projects on their traditional territories adds a level of complexity to doing business.

Former provincial Environment Minister Barry Penner, who now practices private law and consulting, advises foreign businesses interested in investing in B.C. on how to deal with aboriginals.

He said it is an issue that international companies don’t encounter in most other countries, noting he has attended seminars in Japan where aboriginal issues in B.C. are the top concern.

“It’s something new that they must come to grips with. And it’s an added cost in terms of time and money. That’s just the truth,” said Penner.

However, reaching impact-benefit agreements with First Nations can also prove beneficial, particularly when companies establish deals with First Nations and can then present a unified voice to regulators on major projects.

And while it is challenging, industry representatives do not see it as an impediment to economic development.

“Sure, it can be a complex environment to operate in, but it’s just our reality in B.C.,” says BC Hydro president Jessica McDonald.

However, McDonald, who was deputy to then-premier Gordon Campbell when he introduced the “new relationship” concept, says conversations with First Nations are never just about economic opportunities. “It’s about mutual understanding and respect of their unique interests and concerns, and ensuring we truly understand those,” she said.

Developing those relationships takes time.

AltaGas spent years laying the groundwork for its agreements with the Tahltan, including participating in meetings not only in Tahltan territory in remote northwestern B.C., but in other places Tahltan members live, including the Yukon.

Dan Woznow, AltaGas vice-president of energy exports, says that for projects in remote areas, working with First Nations can bring positive returns.

AltaGas was able use contractors and workers from the Tahltan — who created a development corporation 30 years ago — to build the three run-of-river projects. As much as 30 per cent of the labour and equipment on their Forest Kerr project was sourced from the Tahltan.

Woznow said it is also important to remember there are unique burdens on First Nations — multiple projects they must vet and a level of community engagement and meetings not typical in non-native communities.

And the negotiations are getting sophisticated, added Woznow.

“Now, you are not sitting across the table from a chief all the time. They could have (accounting/consulting firm) KPMG and others in the room as well,” he said.

Independent power projects, such as run-of-river, have been at the forefront of benefit agreements with First Nations. In 2013, Clean Energy BC reported there were 202 native bands involved in 116 projects across the province producing 2,381 megawatts of electricity. A survey of just 21 of those projects projected revenues of \$350 million to First Nations for the life of the agreements.

“The good developers ... know it’s the cost of doing business in B.C. and they’d better factor it in,” says Clean Energy BC executive director Paul Kariya. “If they can’t make it work, then they’re not here.”

The B.C. government has signed revenue-sharing agreements with 20 First Nations covering 13 of 18 operating mines in the province. Companies such as Thompson Creek Metals, NewGold and Teck have also signed benefit agreements with First Nations. Companies with prospective projects are also prioritizing deals with First Nations, including Seabridge with the Nisga’a for the proposed \$5.4-billion KSM gold-copper mine.

Often the financial arrangements of these deals are not disclosed, but, for example, it's estimated that NewGold's agreements with the Skeetchestn and Stk'emlupsemc First Nations will provide \$30 million over the life of the New Afton mine in the Interior.

"It's a meaningful, genuine intent and effort and commitment to doing business in a different way," says Karina Brino, president of the Mining Association of B.C.

The breadth of agreements catalogued by The Sun in its database is diverse. In the Southern Interior, the Ktunaxa Nation holds timber rights, shares in revenues from coal mines and has a partnership with the St. Eugene Golf, Resort and Casino.

On Vancouver Island, Vancouver-based Polaris Materials Corp. has an impact-and-benefit agreement with the Kwakiutl First Nation for the Orca Quarry. About half of the quarry's employees are First Nations.

Also on Vancouver Island, the We Wai Kai Nation has an agreement with Marine Harvest ASA over fish farms in its traditional territory that requires environmentally sustainable practices, and provides economic and investment opportunities.

The B.C. Salmon Farmers Association notes its members have signed agreements with 19 First Nations. About 30 per cent of salmon farm workers in the province are First Nations.

The group points to an agreement signed between Marine Harvest and the Kitasoo at Klemtu 17 years ago — which they believe to be one of the first industry-First Nation impact-benefit deals.

"The companies, they were one of the first to really embrace it and recognize this is how things are going to get done in B.C.," says Jeremy Dunn, the association's executive director.

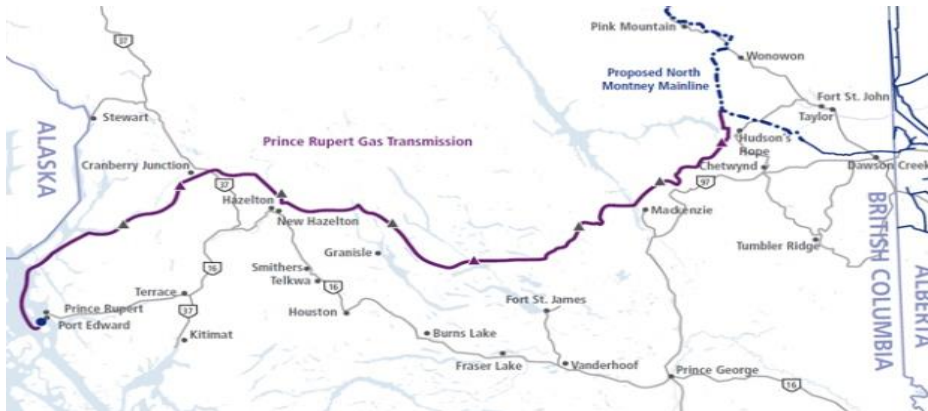
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<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/First+Nations+staking+their+claims+economy/11094723/story.html>

TransCanada reaches deals with three more B.C. First Nations for pipeline

Latest agreements are with the Doig River First Nation, Halfway River First Nation and Yekooche First Nation.

The Canadian Press Posted: Jun 01, 2015 8:53 AM PT Last Updated: Jun 01, 2015 8:53 AM PT



According to the project website, the 900-kilometre pipeline is expected to deliver natural gas from Hudson's Hope to the proposed Pacific NorthWest LNG facility on Lelu Island south of Prince Rupert. (Prince Rupert Gas Transmission Project)

TransCanada Corp. says it has reached project agreements with three more First Nations in northern British Columbia to build a pipeline across the province to a proposed liquefied natural gas terminal on the coast.

Specifics of the agreements weren't announced, but TransCanada said they provide for annual legacy payments over the commercial life of the [Prince Rupert Gas Transmission pipeline](#) plus benefits upon signing and at other milestones.

The latest agreements are with the Doig River First Nation, Halfway River First Nation and Yekooche First Nation. TransCanada has previously reached four other agreements with Lake Babine Nation, Nisga'a Lisims Government, Gitanyow First Nation and Kitselas First Nation.

According to the project website, the 900-kilometre pipeline is expected to deliver natural gas from Hudson's Hope to the proposed Pacific NorthWest LNG facility on Lelu Island south of Prince Rupert.

Last month B.C. Premier Christy Clark said the province had reached an agreement in principle with Pacific NorthWest LNG, owned in majority by Malaysia's Petronas, for the \$36 billion project on B.C.'s northwest coast.

But members of the Lax Kw'alaams First Nation in northwestern British Columbia have rejected a \$1.15-billion offer from Malaysia's Petronas to build the LNG terminal on Lelu Island, because of concerns over the project's potential impact on neighbouring Flora Bank, a marine ecosystem immediately adjacent to Lelu Island.



A image from a promotional video shows an LNG tanker filling up at the proposed Pacific Northwest LNG facility near Prince Rupert, B.C. (Prince Rupert Gas Transmission Project)

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/transcanada-reaches-deals-with-three-more-b-c-first-nations-for-pipeline-1.3095358>

First Nations series: A landmark court victory

Xeni Gwet'in people see land-title win as way to right historic wrongs and move forward for all Tsilhqot'in

By Larry Pynn, Vancouver Sun June 2, 2015 6:41 AM

This is part 2 of a six-part series.

THE NEMIAH VALLEY

Roger William knows something about victory through adversity.

The Xeni Gwet'in chief's journey to become a regional bull-riding champion involved broken teeth, broken cheek bones, and a scary rodeo experience.

“When I jumped off, my spurs got caught and dragged me around and knocked me out,” he recalls. “They couldn’t get me off. Finally, they (steered) me back in the loading chute with the bull. I ended up in hospital. Tore my knee ligaments. It could have been worse.”

William savoured his greatest victory on June 26, 2014, when, on behalf of the Xeni Gwet'in (honey gwe-teen) and the greater Tsilhqot'in (sill-co-teen) nation, the Supreme

Court of Canada unanimously recognized native title to about 1,750 square kilometres of Crown land in the Central Interior and aboriginal rights across the larger region.

“It’s been a 25-year journey to get recognized in this country of Canada,” he explains. “We had to go to this extreme to prove it, to get recognized that we have title.”

William stands atop Bald Mountain, a cool wind tugging at his black cowboy hat and the tassels of his moosehide jacket. He looks proudly across a wide valley, bordered by the snowy Coast Mountains, that is native land for as far as the eye can see.

“We see this win as huge, a first of its kind,” he confirms. “It’s not by choice that we go ... to the Supreme Court of Canada, but now it’s an opportunity to move forward.”

Where the long journey to victory began depends on your perspective.

In the so-called Chilcotin War of 1864, natives killed 20 whites, mostly members of a road-building crew, resulting in the hangings of six chiefs.

More conflict ensued almost 120 years later, in 1983, when the B.C. government granted a commercial logging licence on Tsilhqot’in traditional lands. Natives protested, set up blockades, negotiated with the province, and ultimately issued the Nemiah Declaration of 1989, which banned commercial logging, mining, and dams and guaranteed natives the right to practice their traditional ways, including hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Almost one year after the Supreme Court of Canada decision, The Vancouver Sun is in the Nemiah Valley to see first-hand what the change from Crown land to native title means for the land and those who call it home. The valley may be a sparsely populated area, where 200-plus human residents barely outnumber the wild horses, but make no doubt about it: What’s happening in the Nemiah Valley is going to have consequences elsewhere in B.C.

“We’re breaking new ground,” confirms John Rustad, B.C.’s Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. “No one has ever had a declaration of aboriginal title in Canadian history. The courts have created this entity, but there are certainly lots of unknowns.”

The Tsilhqot’in see the decision as a major first step in helping their people recover from a troubled history, including the smallpox epidemic of 1862, the creation of reserves, residential schools, the ravages of alcohol and drugs, and the loss of traditional ways.

“We need to get caught up. We need to heal,” continues William, noting that economic, social and health issues are intertwined. “We know our history. Now we want to move forward. It’s an opportunity for B.C. and Canada to reconcile with Tsilhqot’in First Nations.”

The title lands represent up to about 10 per cent of overall Tsilhqot'in traditional territory. Natives now want to leverage the court win to reach agreements on management throughout their territory, including revenue sharing and decision-making roles.

"We don't want to focus just on title lands," William said. "We don't want to isolate agreements. We want a consistent process throughout the whole Tsilhqot'in territory."

He warns: "If there's no agreement, it will probably end up back in court."

The Xenigwet'in is one of six First Nations comprising about 3,000 Tsilhqot'in natives. The Nemiah Valley is located about a three-hour drive southwest of Williams Lake, on a gravel road off Highway 20, the main route through the Chilcotin to Bella Coola on the coast.

As a measure of the isolation, a proper road didn't arrive in the valley until 1973. Before that, natives used to travel by horse and wagon to Williams Lake. Every year, Nemiah Valley youth keep the tradition alive with a weeklong journey that coincides with the annual stampede.

Mabel Solomon, 93, remembers those days. She was born in a tent in the Nemiah Valley, a simpler time when natives grew vegetables, ate wild fish and game, raised cattle and enjoyed the unique isolation of their existence. Even today, she speaks only the Tsilhqot'in language, although on any given evening she can be observed in her wheelchair watching English shows on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network or reality programs such as *The Voice*.

With a little prompting, she will provide her own entertainment, hauling out a vintage push-button accordion to play songs, the names of which she's forgotten.

A few years ago, Solomon told her family she would be willing to participate in a blockade in her wheelchair if that's what it took to stop Taseko Mines from developing an open-pit gold-copper mine that would destroy Fish Lake.

"I'll be right up front with my shotgun and I won't miss," she told her family.

Although the B.C. government supported the mine, federal reviews ultimately rejected it — twice, as *Prosperity* and *New Prosperity* — and the natives unilaterally declared the area a tribal park.

Today, the court decision has bought some peace for Solomon. "It's really good that we've won," she says through an interpreter.

Solomon's daughter and son-in-law, Dinah and Jim Lulua, operate a two-storey bed and breakfast built from federal residential school compensation payments, which totalled more than \$60,000 between the two of them.

Ironically, even though they were not permitted to speak their native language at school, they did at home with their families and remained fluent. Today, children are taught the Tsilhqot'in language in school, but do not speak it at home and are losing it, including Jim and Dinah's two boys, now in their 30s.

"We didn't take the time to teach them our language," remarks Jim, a school bus driver. "We just spoke English. That was a big mistake." The couple's B&B is a modest operation, but they receive tourists from around the world looking for an authentic experience, including a dinner of sockeye caught with dipnets at Henry's Crossing on the Chilko River.

Tourism is an economic enterprise that the Xení Gwet'in would like to exploit. After all, with 360-degree mountain scenery, ranchlands and wild horses coexisting with mule deer and grizzlies, the Nemiah Valley is one of the most scenic spots in B.C.

A short drive away over bumpy roads takes visitors to a Chilko Lake campsite known as the movie camp, where locals got jobs as extras during filming of the 1974 U.S. drama *The Bears and I*, co-starring Chief Dan George and described online as "a man seeking peace and quiet finds himself father to three bears." Arrowheads have also been found in the area, evidence of historic aboriginal occupation.

The Xení Gwet'in have built a replica pit house to give tourists some insight into natives' traditional lifestyle.

The house is wedged into the ground and features an opening in the roof where smoke can escape. "Watch out for those big traps," warns The Sun's guide, Laura Setah. "Pack rats live here."

Chilko is the largest, natural high-elevation lake in B.C. and the centrepiece of Ts'il'os Provincial Park, which is co-managed by B.C. and the Xení Gwet'in.

The lake is notorious for high winds. On a recent sunny spring day, they stir up fierce whitecaps and clouds of alkali dust from the dry shoreline of a pond. Setah's late husband, Harry, served as a park ranger here.

"He liked it, working on the land," she recalls. "Lots of horse pack trips, checking out the area."

Horses remain an integral part of the Xení Gwet'in culture. Wild ones are occasionally rounded up, herded into corrals, and trained for use by band members or sold. But not every horse lives a bucolic life on the farm. The Sun revealed in 2013 that the province paid \$73,000 to the Tl'etinqox First Nation at Alexis Creek to round up 14 wild horses (which were then sold at auction for meat) to enhance moose habitat, even though research showed little competition between moose and horses for forage.

Recent DNA research shows that the wild horses of the more remote Brittany Triangle in the Chilcotin show ties to the Canadian horse — a unique breed to Canada that had its origins in France — and, to a lesser extent, the Yakut horse from Russia's eastern Siberia.

Horses are also integral to a smattering of non-natives in the Nemiah Valley — tourism operators, guide-outfitters and ranchers — some of them long-standing residents who have grown up with the same natives who are now in charge.

Jon and Tracy Tanis of Snowy Mountain Outfit operate a ranch-style bed and breakfast and offer wilderness horseback trips into the neighbouring mountains.

Jon has been knocking around the Nemiah Valley since the 1970s. He proposed to Tracy, then living in Ontario, by letter and they married in 1984. The couple moved into the valley in 1986, and went on to raise three daughters.

Before building a log home on 1.2 hectares of leased Crown land in 1989, they went to the elders to obtain their permission, the sort of cultural sensitivity that won't hurt now that natives are the landlord.

"It's going to be interesting to see what happens," Jon said. "It opens up a whole bunch of weird scenarios. But I'm assured it will work out. We have a good relationship. I would hope the sense of community will remain."

Still, no one can predict the future. William, father to three boys and a girl, appreciates that non-natives may have nagging doubts. "'What if someone else gets in as chief and doesn't want to work with us? What's going to happen?' It is possible. The next election is 2018. Until then, I think we might be able to find some certainty, a process to protect people and businesses on title land."

Five guide-outfitting territories are also located to varying degrees on the Xeni Gwet'in title lands, and Jon plans to operate one of those, Tatlow Mountain Outfitters, this year on behalf of its owner, a Port Alberni doctor.

The Xeni Gwet'in have agreed to allow outfitters to operate without disruption for at least a year, with the province collecting the royalties on behalf of the natives. William counters that whatever happens longer term, it is B.C.'s responsibility to compensate non-natives for any losses resulting from the title decision.

Scott Ellis, executive director of the Guide Outfitters Association of B.C., says the situation has naturally caused anxiety for his members and that he hopes amicable settlements can be reached. "We'd like to see a willing seller/willing buyer environment and government take a leading role." An outfitter certificate is for 25 years, with Crown leases for hunting camps lasting 30 to 60 years.

For now, roads remain open to the public for access to private or Crown lands, including eight recreational sites. Hikers, fishers and others wishing to traverse title lands should get permission from natives in advance. Hunting is closed to non-residents.

While natives vigorously opposed Taseko's planned open-pit mine at Fish Lake, the Xeni Gwet'in leadership remains open to industrial development on title lands.

"Don't get me wrong. Some of our members don't want logging, clearcuts, or mining — period. Other members are open, provided it's done our way. Being a leader, I have to look at all sides. If there is an economic opportunity, and it's safe, then why not?"

The province and Tsilhqot'in are working to a deadline — the one-year anniversary of the court agreement — to sign a memorandum of understanding outlining a roadmap for negotiations that could continue for several more years.

"We are looking at all aspects, from social justice to resource development and wildlife issues, a wide range of things," William said.

For the provincial government, the court decision has created a minefield of uncertainty over how to practically implement the ownership change.

Considerations include how to fight diseases and wildfires on what is now native land, ensuring continued public road access through the valley, including Crown land outside the title area, and the fate of non-natives. While B.C. concedes the Xeni Gwet'in own the trees, it says the subsurface mineral rights are still an open topic.

The Supreme Court noted that Section 35 of the Constitution permits incursions on aboriginal title without the consent of the aboriginal people if "justified by a compelling and substantial public purpose and ... not inconsistent with Crowns' fiduciary duty to the aboriginal group."

The changes wrought by the decision are so pervasive that even the ownership of a moose that walks from Crown land to native title land is a matter of debate.

"I'm not sure, and I don't think the courts are sure, either," Rustad said. "Obviously, a moose doesn't respect a line on the sand."

Uncertainty is exactly what the business community had feared from the Xeni Gwet'in decision. The Business Council of B.C. has stated: "If provincial law does not apply to any lands found by a court to be subject to aboriginal title, there will be a legislative vacuum that will hamper investment and the creation of jobs and will endanger the viability of existing operations and jobs in B.C."

And what if talks go poorly and others First Nations decide they, too, want to go to court to prove title and reap the benefits?

Although the Tsilhqot'in case cost tens of millions of dollars, the Xeni Gwet'in benefited from a court decision that ordered about 50 per cent of their legal fees to be split evenly by the senior governments under the so-called Okanagan Test.

Tsilhqot'in lawyer Drew Mildon of Woodward & Company in Victoria said the test, based on a Supreme Court of Canada decision involving the Okanagan First Nation in 2003, required the Tsilhqot'in to prove that the band lacked money, had a legitimate case, and the case had broader implications.

Those are monies that won't be available to another First Nation that might want to also seek court recognition of their title claims. Still, some native bands may be willing to spend millions as an investment in future property rights that would eventually yield much more in revenue.

The federal government has remained in the background to date. B.C. would like to change that, noting the Supreme Court of Canada is a federal institution and that Ottawa has constitutional obligations to aboriginals. The feds may also be urged to help compensate any non-natives uprooted by the court decision.

"It's going to be complex," Rustad said of negotiations. "But it's (work) well worth doing."

Direct Link:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/First+Nations+series+landmark+court+victory/11098048/story.html>

North Slave Métis Alliance seek to join Métis rights court case

Alliance argue that Métis land claim rights are based on ancestry, not 'ethnic Métis-ness'

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 03, 2015 7:23 AM CT Last Updated: Jun 03, 2015 12:11 PM CT



North Slave Métis Alliance president Bill Enge says that 'the Métis Nation has a land claim based on the Indian ancestry of its members, not the ethnic Métis-ness of their members.' (CBC)

The North Slave Métis Alliance is arguing in federal court today that it must be allowed to intervene in a case between the Akaitcho Dene, the federal government, and a rival Métis Nation.

Arguing that there are no "rights-bearing" Métis on their land, the Akaitcho are also asking the federal government to prove that the Northwest Territory Métis Nation's members are actually Métis, and do not belong to the Akaitcho, or another aboriginal group.

The North Slave Métis Alliance, a separate Métis nation, say that they can prove the Akaitcho wrong.

President Bill Enge wants his lawyers to take up the fight with the government, and the Alliance has applied for intervener status.

The North Slave, like many Métis nations across the country, use the [2003 Powley Supreme Court decision](#) to determine the métis status of their membership. The decision defines "Métis" as a "distinctive peoples of mixed ancestry who developed their own customs, practices, traditions and recognizable group identities separate from their Indian, Inuit and European ancestors."

The Northwest Territory Métis Nation does not use the Powley decision to determine the status of its membership, says Enge. Instead, the Nation gives membership to Métis who can trace their ancestry to First Nations who traditionally lived in the territory.

"The [Northwest Territory] Métis Nation has a land claim based on the Indian ancestry of its members," Enge said. "Not the ethnic 'Métis-ness' of its members.

"They cannot be relied on to counter the Akaitcho Dene argument that there are no ethnic or section 35 aboriginal rights-bearing Métis. It would be tantamount to sabotaging their land claim.

Precedent setting?

Both the Northwest Territory Métis Nation, as well as the Attorney General representing the federal government in the case, are asking the judge to deny intervener status to the Métis Alliance, saying it would only slow down and complicate the proceeding.

In their response to the request for an injunction, federal government representatives say that the case has no bearing on the rights of section 35 Métis.

"This matter is not litigation over the issue of whether Métis exist in the NWT," reads the response, "or what the section 35 rights of such Métis might be."

However, the initial claim from the Akaitcho Dene, states that the Akaitcho believe "there have never been 'rights-bearing' Métis communities within the meaning of Powley in Akaitcho Territory," asking the Crown to prove otherwise.

"What historic and current Métis rights-bearing communities does Canada believe are represented by the NWT Métis Nation?" the claim goes on to read.

It's this distinction that Enge takes issue with.

Enge fought the Northwest Territories government earlier this year for the North Slave Métis' traditional right to hunt caribou in the region. [The Alliance was eventually awarded tags.](#)

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/north-slave-m%C3%A9tis-alliance-look-to-join-m%C3%A9tis-rights-court-case-1.3098234>

First Nations series: Sts'ailes stake their economic claim in land of the Sasquatch

Harrison River Valley band reaching out to ensure a share of the region's wealth

By Larry Pynn, Vancouver Sun June 4, 2015



Sts'ailes First Nation Chief Harvey Paul talks about First Nation's economic developments on their reserve near Harrison Mills.

Part 5 in a six-part series.

THE HARRISON RIVER

Believe it. This is Sasquatch country.

The Sasquatch Inn, a popular biker bar during the summer. Sasquatch Days, a celebration of all things big and hairy dates back to the 1930s. The Sasquatch Crossing Eco Lodge, with its friendly three-legged calico cat named Mao. (“She is our little chairman,” asserts lodge co-manager Denny Stobbart.)

Aboriginal artist Ron Austin’s Sasquatch drawing is also widely displayed throughout the Sts’ailes First Nation reserve.

“You’re receiving a gift from the Sasquatch if they allow you to see one,” Sts’ailes Chief Harvey Paul offers with a smile. “I’ve been fortunate, I haven’t. I don’t really think I want to. Some say they have a chilling growl and a bad pungent odour. That’s how you know you’re getting close.”

He leads The Vancouver Sun into the council chambers next to his office and a display case holding a Sasquatch mask made by his grandfather, Ambrose Point, from red alder and black bear fur. The mask went missing in 1939, ending up at the Vancouver Museum, and was returned last year.

Today, the Sasquatch endures in aboriginal mythology as a protector of the land and its wildlife. “Some say the Sasquatch is the spirit or keeper of the woods, responsible for all the birds, fish, and wildlife and the land,” Paul explains.

In that sense, the Sasquatch has its hands full, for the Sts’ailes are a First Nation on the move, reaching out to ensure a share of the economic pie throughout its traditional territory, which includes the entirety of Harrison Lake.

“We want a presence throughout the valley,” says Robert Lagasse, a Manitoba Metis and the chief operating officer of the Sts’ailes Development Corporation. “It keeps us connected to the land.”

The list of activities from which the Sts’ailes obtain revenue is large and growing: Private run-of-river projects; BC Hydro’s Interior to Lower Mainland Transmission Project; logging, road and site clearing, and mobile camp operations; commercial fisheries; a store and gas station; and management of seven recreation campgrounds.

The power lines from the transmission project can be seen from the reserve running along the mountainside, a reminder of some \$21 million in contract work such as site clearing and road building provided to a joint venture of three bands in the area — Sts’ailes, Seabird Island and Cheam. Flatiron-Graham is the primary contractor on the 250-kilometre, 500-kilovolt, \$725-million project. Sts’ailes also received undisclosed compensation for allowing the project to run through its territory.

One of the band’s most recent ventures involves a “participation agreement” with Langley businessman Ralph Berezan for a 55-year master plan at Hemlock Resort,

located nearby between Mission and Harrison Hot Springs. Berezan is now negotiating an agreement with the province.

Plans for the “major, all-season, world-class” resort include expansion of the existing ski and village operation, development of a new village by Harrison Lake, a new gondola, hotels, restaurants, conference centre, pool, spa, marina, mountain biking, ziplining, and “resort residential.”

The agreement provides for a wide range of benefits: Cash, a share of condo sales, preferential hiring and contracting, training in resort management, even 50 free ski passes.

For Berezan, looking across the bargaining table at negotiators for the Sts’ailes First Nation was like staring back through B.C. history. “You only have to listen to their history of how we treated them,” he said. “All they really want is their dignity and to be able to be self-sufficient. And who doesn’t want that?”

Consulting and accommodating with the Sts’ailes ultimately made good business sense.

“They were hard negotiators, but they were still fair,” Berezan continued. “I enjoyed negotiating with them. It’s not about them, it’s about them and their members. It’s a thoughtful process.

“They had excellent foresight. They wanted a long-term agreement and so did I.”

The fact that the band owns a small portion of Morris Valley Road — the access route through the valley to the ski resort — also put them in a strong bargaining position. “We can block that off and say, ‘Hey, you’re trespassing,’” confirms Chief Paul. “It was one of those errors that came to our benefit.”

Paul said the band charges commercial logging trucks \$1 per cubic metre — down from \$2 during more profitable times in the forest industry — or about \$30 to \$40 per truck for the right to travel through the main 880-hectare reserve. They are also negotiating an agreement with the province over encroachment upon less than two hectares of reserve land.

Those fees brought in almost \$100,000 last year, Paul said.

Sonia Lowe, spokesperson for the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, said less than two hectares is at issue — “the difference in area between what was surveyed in the early 1900s, and the road as it was built about 25 years later. The road today follows the same alignment as when it was built.”

The Sts’ailes are Sto:lo people, but operate separately from the Sto:lo Tribal Council, an alliance of First Nations ranging from Hope to Coquitlam and including the Seabird

Island, Scowlitz, Soowahlie, Kwaw'Kwaw'Apilt, Kwantlen, Shxw'ow'hamel, Chawathil, and Cheam bands.

According to Sts'ailes financial statements reported to the federal government, the band had revenues of about \$18.4 million in 2014, up from \$17.4 million in 2013, with revenues pumped back into local operations and investments. "We've heard and seen where communities receive large cash settlements, distribute the money, the people spend it, and then you've got nothing," said Paul, who earned a salary of \$78,640 in 2014.

The Sts'ailes' Development Corporation operates as a for-profit business. One of its five directors is Clarence Louie, the Osoyoos Indian band chief known for his business acumen. But the corporation also has a social heart. The store and gas station employs up to seven staff on any given day — "a few more than we need" — but it offers job training for natives seeking to get into the workforce, Lagasse explains.

The band also acquired 37 hectares that includes the award-winning Sasquatch Crossing Eco Lodge adjoining the reserve, with a current assessed value of \$1.3 million. It includes the historic Pretty Estate, an English-style manor built in 1903, with electrical generation provided by Pretty Creek.

On the other side of the reserve, on about 13 hectares of Crown land, the band operates 21,000-square-foot Sts'ailes Lhawathet Lalem, a retreat and conference centre that can accommodate 120 people, from youth groups to corporations, and even offers lessons in wild plant identification and drum making.

A nine-bed, drug-and-alcohol treatment program with a sweat lodge sits on the same property.

The corporation also has joint ventures with Nations Construction, which is owned by band member Deanna Johnson and managed by her non-native husband, Jim Johnson, who has experience in residential and commercial construction.

The band's diverse business affairs increasingly involve run-of-river projects. Companies provide money up front for natives to consider their proposals, including band officials' time and the hiring of lawyers and consultants. Without such agreements, natives could be out of pocket should a proponent ultimately decide not to proceed with a project, Lagasse explained.

The band, with more than 1,000 members, has purchased 30-per-cent equity in the 5.5-megawatt Sakwi Creek hydro project, which provides backup electrical power to the reserve during frequent power outages. It also receives royalties from two Innergex operations in the Harrison Lake area, 18-megawatt Tipella Creek and 22-megawatt Stokke Creek, with two more Innergex projects in the works, 21-megawatt Tretheway Creek and 51-megawatt Big Silver Creek.

In addition, the band has negotiated an ownership interest in the Bremner hydro project (approved) and the Trio hydro project (under review), at about 25 megawatts each.

The band's revenue sources may include royalty revenues, equity ownership, one-time "trigger payments" once operations begin, as well as preferential contracting work.

About 200 band members also participate in a commercial fishery approved by the federal fisheries department for the Harrison River each year. The band uses a bar-code system so buyers know the fish are legitimate.

"It's traceability, it wasn't poached" Lagasse allowed. "There's a lot of that, not only by First Nations but others, too. This keeps it clean."

The federal fisheries department requires run-of-river projects to create and enhance salmon habitat to account for their industrial footprint, which provides even more benefits for the Sts'ailes people, including the creation of two sloughs to enhance salmon stocks.

Across the river is Kweh-Kwuch-Hum on Mount Woodside, protected by the province due to its cultural importance to the Sts'ailes. Newcomers to the winter dances put their regalia in the forest. Spirit poles or sticks are tied to young cedar trees and over time become one with the living tree.

The sloughs used to be overrun with reeds and blackberry bushes, all but useless as fish habitat. Today, the waters flow clear and clean, spaced native plants grow on the riverbanks, and wood debris has been placed to provide shade and shelter.

Within days of their completion, salmon swam upstream to spawn, renewing a cycle that has sustained the Sts'ailes for generations.

Read more:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/First+Nations+series+ailes+stake+their+economic+claim+land/11106908/story.html#ixzz3cD4BKkCH>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

**Highway of Tears: 'There's a cover-up
going on,' says First Nations tribal
councillor**

Premier claims documents weren't ultimately deleted as councillor calls for inquiry for missing women

By The Early Edition, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 29, 2015 11:07 AM PT Last Updated: May 29, 2015 1:58 PM PT



These images are of 18 women and girls whose deaths and disappearances are part of the RCMP's investigation of the Highway of Tears in British Columbia. The women were either found or last seen near Highway 16 or near Highways 97 and 5. From left to right: (Top row) Aielah Saric Auger, Tamara Chipman, Nicole Hoar, Lana Derrick, Alishia Germaine, Roxanne Thiara; (Middle) Ramona Wilson, Delphine Nikal, Alberta Williams, Shelley-Anne Bascu, Maureen Mosie, Monica Jack; (Bottom row) Monica Ignas, Colleen MacMillen, Pamela Darlington, Gale Weys, Micheline Pare, Gloria Moody. (Individual photos from Highwayoftears.ca)

The B.C. Ministry of Transportation is alleged to have deleted more than a [dozen e-mails about meetings with 80 First Nations leaders along the Highway of Tears](#), and Carrier Sekani Tribal Councillor Mavis Erickson thinks she knows why.

"I haven't heard of those meetings at all, in any matter, shape or form," she told *The Early Edition* host Rick Cluff.

"I was involved when the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights came, I was also involved when the Human Rights Watch came, I was also involved when the United Nations came," she said.

"Community leaders inevitably phone me to be involved and to participate, and I didn't get any phone calls regarding any meetings."



Sekani Carrier Tribal Councillor Mavis Erickson says the alleged deletion of Highway of Tears-related e-mails amounts to a "cover-up" by the provincial government. (New Millenium Leadership and Consulting)

The BC Liberal government is facing questions over the allegations of deleted records related to the Highway of Tears after former Transportation Ministry executive assistant Tim Duncan alleged yesterday that he was told to delete e-mails requested under the Freedom of Information Act in November of 2014.

NDP MLA Jennifer Rice had filed an FOI for records regarding the infamous Highway 16 at that time.

Erickson says she finds the latest allegations troubling and will continue to push for a national inquiry into the issue.

"There's a cover-up going on and I think this just shows more of that fear that we have that things are going on and [government] wants this whole story to go away," she said.

"It's been going on for years and so the destruction of these alleged e-mails is just more of the same."

Premier responds to controversy

Speaking in Dawson Creek, Premier Christy Clark said the allegations should be investigated.

"If anyone broke the rules then they need to be held responsible," she said.

But Clark also said she believes almost all the documents in question were ultimately released.

"That information is publicly available and as I understand it, none of it was permanently deleted," she said.

At least 18 women have gone missing or been murdered along Highway 16, the route that connects Prince George and Prince Rupert in Northern B.C.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/highway-of-tears-there-s-a-cover-up-going-on-says-first-nations-tribal-councillor-1.3093034>

St. Mary's bell to toll for Canada's murdered and missing Aboriginal women

[Sarah Sacheli](#)

May 29, 2015 - 9:15 PM EDT

Last Updated: May 29, 2015 - 9:15 PM EDT

They are Canada's stolen sisters, and St. Mary's Anglican Church remembers them.

For 22 days beginning Sunday, the bell at the historic Walkerville church will toll 51 times. By June 21, it will have tolled 1,122 times, once for each of the murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada.

The bell tolling is a project for women, by women, said Margaret McAllum, the St. Mary's parishioner organizing it. After learning of it at a diocesan meeting, she took the project under her wing.

"The archbishop challenged women of the church to take up this project," McAllum said. "He said women are the backbone of the church, and we are."

Across Canada, Anglican churches will ring their bells in solemn remembrance. The church also has a website, 22days.ca, through which it takes responsibility for its part in harming Aboriginal culture in Canada by running residential schools until 1969.

"We destroyed families and communities, and drove students and their parents, siblings and children into dysfunction and addiction," the church website says.

The Anglican Church helped establish the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#), which will hold its final meeting on Sunday. The ringing of the bells will coincide with that event.

Parishioner Colleen Higgins used the project to educate herself about missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Sixty-seven per cent were murdered. Of those murders, 53 per cent remain unsolved.

Most shocking, Higgins said, is the fact that the vast majority of the missing and murdered women – 88 per cent – were mothers.

Higgins will ring the bell at 5 p.m. on June 5, as Art in the Park across the street at Willistead kicks off.

When she does, she will read the names of 21 women who disappeared or were found murdered before their 20th birthdays.

Higgins, who, in addition to being an active church volunteer, is chairwoman of the Windsor-Essex County Community Drug Strategy. Since she works with young people, she wanted to honour missing and murdered Aboriginal youth.

“I started going through the names and reading their stories. I only got to the letter F and I already had 51 names.”

St. Mary’s church was erected in 1904 by Hiram Walker’s three sons as a memorial to their parents. It is named in honour of Mary Walker, the men’s mother.

The bell in the stone church was forged by the same firm that made Big Ben in London, England. It weighs 773 kg.

On it is inscribed the King James Bible verse, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Direct Link: <http://blogs.windsorstar.com/news/st-marys-bell-to-toll-for-canadas-murdered-and-missing-aboriginal-women>

Helen Betty Osborne's story is timeless — and it shouldn't be

Author David Robertson on Unreserved today

By David Robertson, [for CBC News](#) Posted: May 30, 2015 12:17 PM ET Last Updated: May 30, 2015 4:53 PM ET



Author David Robertson's book *Betty: The Helen Betty Osborne Story*, goes on sale June 2 at McNally Robinson Booksellers in Winnipeg. (Illustration by Scott B. Henderson)

Helen Betty Osborne's story is timeless — and that's a fact I struggle with. I wish it wasn't.

I wish she could be remembered only as the vibrant, driven and kind young woman she was.

But for that to happen, change needs to happen. And to create change, we need to know her face — and the faces of the many hundreds who have followed.

Then, and only then, can we move beyond viewing these women, sisters, mothers, daughters, as statistics. Their faces need to be real to us.

In my experience, the graphic novel is the best way to bring history to life in a tangible way, so that we can see it, hear it, touch it.

Of course, I've written Betty's story before. It was my first published book, *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne*. That was in 2008. Back then, it was thought that around 600-700 indigenous women had been murdered or gone missing. Since then, the official number has risen to about 1,200.

I think two things have changed since 2008: One, we are more aware of the epidemic. This is a result of social media, more coverage from news outlets, and, perhaps, in some small way, literature like my first book.

Secondly, tragically, more of our women are being murdered or going missing. Almost every day, I see a notice about another indigenous women or girl who has gone missing posted on my social media news feed. It's heartbreaking.

But there are positive things happening. Last year, amidst the horrific news that another young woman, Tina Fontaine, had been murdered, there was hope.

And it wasn't that thousands had gathered at Oodena Circle at The Forks. It was who had gathered.

Men and women, old and young. Hipsters. Business people. Different cultures. That sort of coming together is hopeful. That sort of coming together says to me that we are tired of things continuing the way they are.

What more can we do? The answer is simple. Share. Take in knowledge. And when you've taken in that knowledge, give it to somebody else. Lend my book to somebody. Talk to them about it.

One thing to keep in mind: Helen Betty Osborne's murder sparked the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and one of its key findings was that indifference contributed to the tragedy of her murder and the miscarriage of justice that followed.

What does that mean? People needed to speak up.

So it's your turn. I do it with books. Find your way.

Direct Link: www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/helen-betty-osborne-s-story-is-timeless-and-it-shouldn-t-be-1.3093684

'You are the ones who've been detectives'

Relatives, loved ones of missing indigenous women urged to keep the fight up



Danielle Boissoneau (L) seen in a 2013 file photo. Boissoneau, who chaired the organizing committee said her "heart was full and overflowing" because of the number of people who attended.

Hamilton Spectator

By [Nicole O'Reilly](#), Jun 02, 2015

The names are too many to list, the pain and loss too overwhelming to measure.

Just a handful of missing and murdered indigenous women were mentioned by name at The Uncomfortable Truth, a public forum held in Hamilton City Hall council chambers Monday night. But the group that gathered spoke about fighting for the thousands of women and girls.

It's not a new problem, rather a long-standing one that began with colonization, speakers said before a standing-room-only crowd. Many called for a national inquiry.

In her keynote address, CBC journalist and visual artist Angela Sterritt congratulated the families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls for fighting hard to get the issue in the headlines after decades.

"You are the ones who have been the detectives ... you have been the police scouring the lands for your loved ones," she said.

Sterritt shared some of her own story coming from a disenfranchised family, being on the streets of British Columbia at 14 and "at least two times being left for dead."

She noted that while the conversations are happening, a lot more needs to happen to address the deep-seated issues of racism, sexism and violence that persist.

Two community members also shared their emotional, personal stories.

Norma General, a Cayuga elder, said she thought she would lose her sanity after her pregnant granddaughter Tashina General was murdered on Six Nations in 2008.

"It felt like my skin had been torn off my body and that I was just raw," she said. "It was hard for me to breathe."

Tashina's boyfriend, lacrosse star Kent Hill, was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 15 years after being convicted of second-degree murder.

Wanda Jamieson, whose mother Cynthia Jamieson was murdered during a brutal sexual assault in 2002, spoke not only about what happened to her mother, but also the additional trauma with how the case was handled by the media and the courts. She felt her mother was poorly portrayed.

Jamieson was also unhappy with the communication she received from police.

"What happened, what happened, what happened to my mother," she cried, saying that she had to sit through brutal details in court, but didn't feel she fully understood what happened until studying her culture's history.

"She was a wonderful woman," she said.

James Anthony was found guilty of first-degree murder in Cynthia's death and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 25 years.

Danielle Boissoneau, who chaired the organizing committee said her "heart was full and overflowing" because of the number of people who attended.

Boissoneau encouraged everyone in attendance Monday to fight apathy many have toward the issue.

Direct Link: <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5655845--you-are-the-ones-who-ve-been-detectives-/>

Bells toll across Canada for missing and murdered aboriginal women

Cathedral bells will ring each Wednesday until National Aboriginal Day on June 21

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 03, 2015 4:03 PM ET Last Updated: Jun 03, 2015 5:19 PM ET



Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal was one of 50 churches that rang its bells today to commemorate the missing and murdered Aboriginal women on the RCMP list. (Radio-Canada)

A cross-country chorus of 1,122 bells tolled from Anglican churches this afternoon, one for each aboriginal woman on the RCMP's list of missing and murdered.

It took nearly an hour and a half.

The initiative, part of the 22 Days campaign, called on churches to ring their bells together at 2 p.m. to create a "wave of sound" across the country.

"It's very moving. It's a very strange sound. It changes the sound of Ste-Catherine Street," said Rev. Paul Kennington, the Rector of Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal.

"People look up and ask why is it ringing and they're interested to hear, 'To raise awareness about indigenous women missing and murdered,' and I have to say it's a bit of a scandal that people don't know much about it."

The 22 Days campaign, named to mark the time between the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report and National Aboriginal Day, was started by deans from several Anglican churches across Canada.

It encourages Canadians to make a commitment towards reconciliation, offering a number of suggestions of steps to take including learning to say "Thank you," in an indigenous language, talking to children about the history of residential schools and identifying one of the calls to action from the TCR that matters personally.

Anglican churches across Canada have created displays marking the work of the commission, the relationship between the church and aboriginal people, and the legacy of the residential schools.

"But that's inside and we thought, how do we take that outside?" Kennington said. "The bells seemed a very easy and obvious way of attracting attention and saying, 'Find out about this and speak to the people who can make things change.'"

Fifty churches in total, two in Quebec, participated in the bell-ringing event today as the events surrounding the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission closed in Ottawa.

The bells will ring again June 10 and June 17.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/bells-toll-across-canada-for-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-1.3098884>

Special Topic: Residential Schools

Reconciliation Starts With a Ringing Bell

Posted: 05/28/2015 6:06 pm EDT Updated: 05/28/2015 6:59 pm EDT



For 120 years, indigenous children in Canada were separated by federal law from their families and communities and sent to church-run Indian residential schools. The documented purpose of these schools was to wipe out indigenous cultures, languages, spirituality and traditions. It failed, but it caused much continuing harm in the process. Many of these students were physically and sexually abused, did not learn how to have good relationships and were taught to be ashamed of themselves and their parents. Thousands died at these schools and never came home at all.

This Sunday, participating churches across Canada will be ringing bells at noon, ringing for reconciliation, acknowledging their part in this process and their commitment to working with indigenous peoples to build a new and brighter future. Those churches that don't have belfries, like First United Church and All Saints Westboro in Ottawa, will be outside ringing handbells, tambourines and anything that makes a ringing noise. Canada's [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), which has spent six long years listening to the testimony of residential school survivors, is marking the end of its journey from May 31-June 3 with ceremonies, educational events, and a call to action. Across Canada, all kinds of people are participating in the [walks for reconciliation, planting heart gardens, and other events](#).

In other parts of the world, grave injustices deliberately committed against a people can lead to decades or centuries of further hatred and violence. Indigenous peoples in Canada want to move forward with the rest of Canada, in a relationship of justice and harmony. This involves acknowledging not only the injustices of the past, but the continuing injustice and trauma of murdered and missing indigenous women, destruction of indigenous lands and waters, and the fact that First Nations and Inuit children receive a much [lower standard of education](#) in their communities than other Canadian kids. Reconciliation is a recognition of these realities and a commitment to action. We can't just be sorry about what happened in the past, we must rectify the injustices of today and build a better future together based on justice and equality.

The Truth and Reconciliation's [Walk for Reconciliation](#) starts on Sunday at 11 a.m. at l'Ecole Secondaire de L'Ile in Gatineau, winds its way across the Portage Bridge between Québec and Ontario through Anishnaabe (Algonquin) sacred land, a traditional meeting place of nations, and ends at Ottawa City Hall where walkers will be welcomed 1.30 p.m., followed by music and entertainment by indigenous artists until 5 p.m. The full schedule of events in Ottawa is available [here](#).

On Wednesday, June 3, children and youth will plant a Garden of Hearts at Rideau Hall (the Governor General's residence) in Ottawa in memory of children that "went missing" while at residential school. Many of the older schools are flanked by the [unmarked graves of children, while others died in an attempt to escape their schools](#). In the majority of cases, their parents were never informed about what happened to them, as the schools were not accountable in any way to parents. ["Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams" Heart Gardens](#) will also be planted across Canada.

The last of Canada's Indian residential schools closed in 1996. The residential school experience, the attempt to break the spirit and bodies of an entire race of people, is not just felt by those who survived the schools, but their families and communities too. Off-reserve First Nations kids who had a family member attend residential school are [less likely to complete high school than those who don't](#).

Those who wish to know more might want to look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's interim report [*They Came for the Children*](#). Another good resource is the National Film Board of Canada production of [*We Were Children*](#), the personal story of two survivors.

Reconciliation is to come together, understand each other, and move forward with a new and better relationship. It may start with ringing a bell or planting a garden, but there is a long road to walk ahead.

This article first appeared on Dr. Marika Morris' blog.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/marika-morris/why-bells-will-be-ringing_b_7463326.html

The truth may set us free to walk again

By: James Wilson

Posted: **05/30/2015 3:00 AM**

As Cree youngsters in the north, we are taught the tradition of how to walk on the land and in the bush -- with each foot fall carefully and quietly placed so as not to disturb the food sources that have always meant the difference between thriving and starvation. It is a hard-won but essential skill for those living off the land and it takes many years of practice to master.

Sadly, like so many of our traditions, this one was almost swept away during the tragic Indian residential schools period, described by Justice Murray Sinclair, chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as Canada's greatest shame.

On Tuesday, after the commission's executive summary and final recommendations are released, the baton will be passed to people like Ry Moran, director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba. Here, the many hours of deeply personal testimony will be housed and a plan struck to foster further research and to decide how best to pass on all that has been learned.

As he reflects on the many tears that were shed during the thousands of hours of disclosures, the horrors that still haunt many Canadians, and all that was lost, Moran said. "At its core, kids were denied the right to be children and to feel the love of their parents in their lives. At the same time, parents were denied the right to give love -- an attack on the most fundamental and sacred elements of any society."

When I think back on the role my own parents played in our lives and in Moose Lake, Man., where they both began their careers as teachers, how different things could have been.

Though they arrived separately to a reserve that was accessible only by boat, snowmobile or dog team back then, they left together and their story is nothing short of remarkable in the way it paints what life in a Cree community used to be like.

Yes, they witnessed first-hand the chasm created by residential schools, but, as the community's first Cree teacher, my dad fell in love with another young teacher, the daughter of a Scottish couple who no doubt feared their girl was entering the unknown. Together, their time there was impactful and not only in romantic ways but in how they helped hold the community together.

I love to hear their stories about Moose Lake, back when teachers used to smoke at the front of their classrooms, and physical education entailed cutting wood and hauling water.

They both spent most every evening visiting the families in the reserve. Mum says they had a calendar mapping out who they would have tea with on which night, so they could eventually spend time with all of the community.

Now and then I still run into people who used to be their students, and I am proud to say the relationships they built there are still cherished.

My parents often talk about the people from the reserve who lived off the land. There was no such grandiose a title as "elder" back then, only people who held themselves with the confidence of spending years being solely responsible for their own and their family's existence.

When young people began returning from residential schools, it is fascinating that what struck those who lived off the land the most is that these "students" had to be taught how to walk all over again. Not with the harsh heel strike they had learned in the towns and cities but with the gentle foot fall of their early childhoods.

Maybe that will be the lasting legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission -- that we can face the truth of our past, see a way forward that is hopeful, and learn how to walk gently together so that, as Justice Sinclair so eloquently said, "we can turn our greatest shame into our greatest source of pride" as peoples and as a nation.

James Wilson is commissioner of the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, a neutral body mandated to encourage discussion, facilitate public understanding, and enhance mutual respect between all peoples in Manitoba.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/the-truth-may-set-us-free-to-walk-again-305554891.html>

Residential schools findings point to 'cultural genocide,' commission chair says

Final report from Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be released June 2

By John Paul Tasker, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 29, 2015 9:04 PM ET Last Updated: May 30, 2015 10:29 AM ET

At least 6,000 aboriginal children died while in the residential school system, says Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Sinclair, who has been tasked with studying the legacy of the residential schools, says that the figure is just an estimate and is likely much higher. Residential schools were established in the 19th century and the last ones closed in 1996.

"We think that we have not uncovered anywhere near what the total would be because the record keeping around that question was very poor," Sinclair told Rosemary Barton of CBC's *Power & Politics*. "You would have thought they would have concentrated more on keeping track."

Sinclair offered the figure of 6,000 in a later interview with Evan Solomon to air Saturday on CBC Radio's *The House* — much higher than earlier estimates that put the number of school children who died in the system at less than 4,000, but still possibly far short of the real outcome.

Sinclair, who was Manitoba's first aboriginal judge, said one estimate made in the early part of the 20th century was that 24 to 42 per cent of aboriginal children who attended the residential schools died at school or shortly after leaving school.

Most of the children died from malnourishment or disease. Some children who attended the schools in the 1940s and 1950s were even subjected to science experiments in which they were deprived essential nutrients and dental care.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, struck in 2009, is writing an exhaustive history of the residential school system. The commissioners interviewed over 7,000 people, and the final report, which is expected to be released on June 2, will span six volumes and include over two million words.

'Cultural genocide'

The new death toll comes in the wake of comments made by Beverley McLachlin, the chief justice of the Supreme Court. At an event on Thursday, McLachlin said that Canada attempted to commit "cultural genocide" against aboriginal peoples.



Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chair Justice Murray Sinclair releases his final report next week. (Darryl Dyck/Canadian Press)

"The most glaring blemish on the Canadian historic record relates to our treatment of the First Nations that lived here at the time of colonization," McLachlin said. She was delivering the fourth annual Pluralism Lecture of the Global Centre for Pluralism, founded in 2006 by the Aga Khan, spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims, and the federal government.

Canada, she said, developed an "ethos of exclusion and cultural annihilation."

Sinclair said he agrees with McLachlin's characterization of the country's history.

"I think as commissioners we have concluded that cultural genocide is probably the best description of what went on here. But more importantly, if anybody tried to do this today, they would easily be subject to prosecution under the genocide convention," Sinclair told Evan Solomon of CBC Radio's *The House*.

"The evidence is mounting that the government did try to eliminate the culture and language of indigenous people for well over a hundred years. And they did it by forcibly removing children from their families and placing them within institutions that were cultural indoctrination centres.

"That appears to us to fall within the definition of genocide under the UN convention," Sinclair said.

The United Nations' [convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide](#) does not address "cultural genocide," but it says genocide may include causing "mental harm" to a racial or religious group.

A spokesperson for Bernard Valcourt, the minister of aboriginal affairs, would not comment on the chief justice's remarks, but issued a statement saying, "While we cannot undo the past, we can learn from it and we have taken the steps necessary to bring closure to the legacy of the Indian residential schools."

Policy of 'aggressive assimilation'

In the 19th century, the Canadian government developed a policy of "aggressive assimilation" calling for aboriginal children to be taught at church-run, government-funded residential schools.

The government felt children were easier to mould than adults, and the concept of a boarding school was the best way to prepare them for life in mainstream society.

Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, was a strong proponent of the system.

"When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with his parents who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write," he told the House of Commons in 1883.

The last residential schools, St. Michael's Indian Residential School and Gordon Indian Residential School, both located in Saskatchewan, closed in 1996.

In 2008, Prime Minister Harper made a historic apology for the harm caused by the residential school system.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/residential-schools-findings-point-to-cultural-genocide-commission-chair-says-1.3093580>

Aboriginal activists say end of residential school commission is just the start of the conversation

18 foundations and philanthropic organizations signed declaration to bring aboriginals and non-aboriginals together.



Andrea Nemtin, president and CEO of the Inspirit Foundation.

By: [Marco Chown Oved](#) Staff Reporter, Published on Sat May 30 2015

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission presents its final recommendations, it will mark the end of many years of struggle to get a full and transparent accounting of what occurred when the Crown confiscated aboriginal children from their parents, a practice that went on for more than 150 years.

But for Andrea Nemtin and Wanda Brascoupé Peters, the work is far from over. These women, who run the Inspirit Foundation and The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, believe the final report shouldn't be seen as the end of the process of national reconciliation, but instead its beginning.

"Now it's our time to play our role in the reconciliation," said Nemtin. "Moving forward, we need to all be there to form a new relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people."

Nemtin and Brascoupé Peters will be delivering a declaration signed by 18 charities, foundations and philanthropic organizations, pledging millions of dollars to programs that will work toward mutual understanding and respect between all peoples coast to coast.

"Reconciliation is a large word. It can mean different things to different people, much like philanthropy," said Brascoupé Peters. "It's going to take multiple different voices on multiple different topics to have a lasting effect. It's not just one thing."

In a ceremony befitting a treaty, the declaration will be presented to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in a formal ceremony in Ottawa.

"Today we, the undersigned, come to you as a group from Canada's philanthropic community," reads an advanced copy of the declaration provided to the Star. "We bring with us our networks, our voices, and our resources, along with new ways of thinking and doing to our work."

Signatories include the Laidlaw Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, RBC Foundation, TD Bank Group, The Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative and The Molson Foundation.

“We are committed to supporting the fulfilment of the vision of Aboriginal Peoples, to building a fairer and more just country, and to the recommendations that will be outlined by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ... This is an important calling to which all of us are duty bound to respond.”

Nemtin and Brascoupe Peters hope the declaration will stand as a guiding document that will shape spending in the philanthropic sector for years to come, but point out that projects are already up and running.

They include the Canadian Roots Exchange, the 4Rs Youth Movement, {Re}conciliation, the Canadian Learning Bond and [Canadians for a new partnership](#).

“We’re working together both to create change and create relationships,” said Nemtin. “As Murray Sinclair said: reconciliation requires both [a new way of listening](#) and a new way of talking.”

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/05/30/aboriginal-activists-say-end-of-residential-school-commission-is-just-the-start-of-the-conversation.html>

Chief Justice ignites debate over Canada’s treatment of aboriginals

SEAN FINE

JUSTICE WRITER — The Globe and Mail

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Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin’s assertion that Canada attempted “cultural genocide” against aboriginal peoples is launching a debate on whether Canada has sugar-coated its history, failing to confront the magnitude of the harm it has done to aboriginals.

It is also highlighting a debate about the proper role of judges. Slightly more than two decades ago, the late Supreme Court justice John Sopinka urged judges to put aside their “fear of entering the political fray,” saying the biggest threat to free speech came from the judiciary’s self-imposed restraint. The Chief Justice’s comments, in a speech on pluralism Thursday night, was a step into that fray.

Already, aboriginal groups say they will invoke the statement as they press their cause in a variety of ways. “The fact that the highest justice of Canada’s highest court is affirming this reality [of cultural genocide] is so tremendously powerful,” National Chief Perry

Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations, which represents the country's elected chiefs, said in a statement Friday. Chief Justice McLachlin's recognition "must inform the approach to policy making, law making and reconciliation" in Canada.

David Rosenberg, a Vancouver lawyer who represented the Tsilhqot'in band of British Columbia in its landmark victory at the Supreme Court last year, said in an interview that he would raise the Chief Justice's statement in court only in response to Crown arguments "about fair treatment, if it tries to justify what happened. But I wouldn't raise it first."

A former chief executive officer with the Canadian Jewish Congress says this country committed genocide, not merely cultural genocide. Among other things, Bernie Farber cites the work of University of Regina professor James Daschuk, who published a 2013 book, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*, asserting that prime minister John A. Macdonald had a deliberate policy of starving the Plains Indians. The book won the an award named after Macdonald from the Canadian Historical Association.

"I say this as a child of Holocaust survivors," Mr. Farber said in an interview. "My father was the only Jewish survivor of his village. I was brought up in that shadow and I understand what that pain is all about." Those who tell aboriginals to "move on" do not understand that, "until you confront it and admit it, you can't even start to heal. And we're not even there yet."

Jim Miller, a professor emeritus of history at the University of Saskatchewan, said that Canada did not commit genocide – "we relied on aboriginal people for too many things" – and Macdonald did not attempt to eradicate the Plains Indians. But in the 1870s and 1880s, the government did "use food as a weapon. They deliberately cut back rations from those who were holdouts to treaties." And people died as a result.

He said Chief Justice McLachlin's use of the term "cultural genocide" is accurate, and a turning point for Canada. "It gives a seal of approval and endorsement from a very senior, prominent, respected figure in public life in Canada to an interpretation of Canadian history that many people have resisted until now. We've had a kind of rosy picture of ourselves, mainly by contrasting ourselves with the Americans who followed military policies toward Western First Nations in the late 19th century. We've all convinced ourselves as a people that our handling of aboriginal affairs was much better, perhaps even beneficent."

He called her comments entirely appropriate. "She didn't make partisan comments. She didn't comment on contemporary government policy. And she was in a position to speak authoritatively, having spent months and years working on the history of cases like Delgamuukw or the recent Tsilhqot'in decision."

The Chief Justice's speech was troubling for Emmett Macfarlane, a political science professor at the University of Waterloo. "What troubles me a little bit is that she and the

court will continue to face cases where that historical perspective is deeply relevant to indigenous rights and land title claims.” He said the legal community is deferential to Chief Justice McLachlin to the point of “hero worship,” and unlikely to criticize her.

Gerald Chipeur, a Calgary constitutional lawyer, said Chief Justice McLachlin’s comments were not controversial but a reflection of widely accepted fact, implicitly acknowledged by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in his 2008 apology to aboriginal peoples for the abuses of the residential schools.

Phil Fontaine, a former national chief, said the Chief Justice’s assertion is “a very clear signal to government in all jurisdictions that indigenous people face unique challenges, and that governments have to be more responsive to meet those challenges. She’s also calling out to Canadians that what is needed is a greater effort in terms of education and information about our place in Canada.”

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/chief-justice-ignites-debate-over-canadas-treatment-of-aboriginals/article24710491/>

Residential schools impacted nearly all aboriginal social indicators: TRC chair



[Michelle Zilio](#), CTVNews.ca

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The chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) says next week's report will show that the residential school system had an impact on nearly all of the social markers used to measure the state of affairs for aboriginal people in Canada.

[Speaking with CTV's Question Period](#), Justice Murray Sinclair, who lead the TRC, offered some details about Tuesday's highly-anticipated report into residential schools.

"In our report, which we are releasing, we talk about each of the social indicators that society uses to mark the state of affairs of the indigenous peoples of this country," said Sinclair.



Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, appears on CTV's Question Period May 31, 2015.

"And we point out that it's very rare to find to any social marker in this country that doesn't have some connection, directly or indirectly, to the residential school experience."

The residential school system was established in the 19th century as a way to assimilate Canada's aboriginal children; the last one closed in 1996.

More than 150,000 aboriginal children were torn from their families and enrolled in the church-run schools, where many experienced abuse and neglect.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper formally apologized on behalf of the government of Canada in 2008 for failing aboriginal people "so profoundly." The TRC was also established that year and given a five-year mandate, including the creation of an accurate and public historical record of the residential school system and the experiences of the children who attended them.

In a speech last week, Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin said Canada committed "cultural genocide" against aboriginal peoples through policies like residential school system. Sinclair said the TRC made similar findings.

"We (the TRC) have pointed out that there is at least one, if not two or more, provisions in the United Nations convention on genocide that might be applicable to the situation involving residential schools in this country."

For Sinclair, the residential school system should concern not only the victims and their families, but all Canadians. He argues that the system affected generations of Canadians who were influenced by a system-wide intolerance toward aboriginal people.

"Even those children who didn't go to residential school, who went to public schools, were affected by the very same teachings that were going on in the schools, because the attitude of society as reflected in residential schools was also reflected in public schools," said Sinclair.

“Aboriginal children were taught that they were heathens, savages, pagans, they came from an inferior culture, an inferior people.”

While Sinclair admits that Canada has made strides in addressing racism toward aboriginal people, he said society still has to work to address "unconscious racism." To elaborate on his point, Sinclair cited the supposed cultural neutrality of the court system.

"What's the first thing we do with the witness when come into the witness box? We tell them to take the Bible in their right hand. And what does that say to those who are not Christian? What does that say to aboriginal people who follow a different way?"

Sinclair said change especially needs to happen at all levels of government.

"The federal government has a significant responsibility when it comes to aboriginal people. But it's also about how all governments are governing and how they're doing things."

He pointed to Manitoba, where child-welfare agencies have been using hotels to house foster children, the majority of whom are aboriginal. While Sinclair acknowledged the Manitoba government's move to ban housing in hotels by June 1, he said more has to be done to address the systemic issues in the foster-care system.

"They're separating children from their homes. They're separating children from their communities, when the problem is the parents," said Sinclair.

He suggested the government consider a system similar to that adopted in northern Manitoba, where parents are removed from troubled homes, instead of children, and replaced by more appropriate caregivers, such as other family members.

And if children must be removed from their home, Sinclair said they should be placed in "culturally appropriate environments."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/residential-schools-impacted-nearly-all-aboriginal-social-indicators-trc-chair-1.2399529>

Justice Murray Sinclair shares vision for Truth and Reconciliation

The chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission hopes to see balance in relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.



Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

By: [Joanna Smith](#) Ottawa Bureau reporter, Published on Sat May 30 2015

As Justice Murray Sinclair prepares to wrap up his work as chair of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), he spoke to the Star about his what it was like to bear witness to the legacy of the [residential school system](#) in such painful detail and his vision for relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada.

How did you convince non-Aboriginal Canadians to engage in the process as participants and not just observers?

What we said to people was, “We don’t need you to feel that you are connected to this history. We need you to feel that you are part of the future and that you’re part of the solution, and therefore we have to talk about what your role is going to be going forward . . .” We ran into a lot of the people at the beginning, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, who said reconciliation is never going to happen. My (response was) you don’t have to believe that it is going to happen. You have to believe that it should happen.

What does reconciliation look like to you?

Reconciliation is always [about relationships](#). It’s about bringing balance to the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. At an individual level, people often ask, “What can I do?” My answer to that is always, “Look at how you believe and how you behave and how you think and change that.”

What can efforts to promote awareness of Canada’s history with residential schools learn from Holocaust education?

You have to look at the history of how the Holocaust was treated publicly after the Second World War. It could have disappeared from the memory of everybody if world leaders hadn’t done certain things as a result of that phenomenon . . . There are laws in place that say you actually can’t deny the Holocaust. If there were laws in place that said you cannot deny the fact of residential schools and the abuse that occurred, that would certainly move this conversation into a better framework.

How do you expect the federal government to respond to the commission’s report?

The reality is that the situation that we have now came about at the hands of Liberal governments and Conservative governments, so there is no particular political party that is going to have the ability to say, “We can do better than these guys.” Everybody has shown [that they can’t do better](#). So what we are saying is that we need you to listen to what the people are saying and we want the people to be the ones to lead this discussion. A lot of good reconciliation work can be done without government action and that’s what we want people to understand and embrace.

Will the report recommend doing away with the Indian Act?

What I can tell you, and it comes as no surprise, is that we can’t continue to do things the way we have been doing them . . . Everybody says, “We don’t like (the Indian Act). It’s not good, we have to change it.” The problem is, people can’t agree on what they need to put in its place and that’s the issue . . . So, the question is: “What kind of legislation needs to be in place in order to ensure that the relationship between Aboriginal people and the government of this country is a proper, balanced relationship as it was intended when the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued?”

What effect did hearing these stories of abuse and intergenerational trauma have on you personally?

As I said to the commissioners, it will do no good for anyone if we all break down and can’t function anymore. But at the same time, we have shed many tears with survivors and we have shed many tears amongst ourselves.

What do you plan to do next?

I have a trailer attached to my truck right now that I want to live in for a while. I would like to find a quiet space and just clear my head a bit. And then I’m scheduled to retire next year, so I might do that. I probably have a book or two that I have got to write. I am putting all of those thoughts aside for the moment because I want to finish this work, and there is so much detail around the next several weeks that I can’t afford to start thinking about other things.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/05/30/justice-murray-sinclair-shares-vision-for-truth-and-reconciliation.html>

Toronto walk marks end of First Nations Truth and Reconciliation inquiry

“We’ve got to undo the injustices and not just say we’re sorry,” says one of hundreds who marched in the rain to remember residential school abuses and call for change.



Catherine Brooks shares her hope for change and reconciliation between aboriginal and settler peoples. Her mother, a residential school survivor, never revealed the details of her ordeal until she was on her deathbed, Brooks said.

By: [Peter Edwards](#) Star Reporter, Published on Sun May 31 2015

It rained heavily on Gordon Peters and his fellow marchers on Sunday, and that didn't bother him at all.

“In our culture we say the rain comes because it's cleansing,” said Peters, Grand Chief of the [Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians](#). “It washes things away ... The rain is good.”

Peters was one of about 250 mostly First Nations marchers who peacefully [walked and drummed through downtown](#) to Queen's Park to draw attention to the completion of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission inquiry into residential schools.

The Toronto walk was one of a host of such observances across the country Sunday, timed to coincide with the release of the commission's final report on Tuesday. A march in Ottawa, led by drummers, drew at least 7,000 people, among them Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Olympic medallist [Clara Hughes](#).

The \$60-million commission was part of a landmark compensation deal between Ottawa, the Crown and residential school survivors. It visited hundreds of communities and heard testimony from 7,000 survivors.

The inquiry has probed widespread physical, emotional and sexual abuse — including many unreported deaths and unmarked graves — of First Nations children who were forced for generations to attend the government-supported, church-run schools. The last of the schools, which left a deep legacy of emotional pain, loss of culture and broken family relationships, closed in 1996.

Peters said his grandparents on his father's side were quiet about what happened to them at the schools, where native languages and traditions were forbidden in a formalized government effort to "take the Indian out of the child."

"They didn't talk about it," Peters said. "Just like they didn't talk about the war when they got back."

Catherine Brooks of Toronto also marched on Sunday in the rain.

She said her mother, Madeline Brooks, did talk about the abuses she and her siblings suffered but it took a long time.

On the last night of her life, when she was 93 years old, Brooks' mother finally told her some of what happened.

"On the night she was dying, she had to tell someone what happened and that was me," Brooks said. "She said they did terrible dirty things to them. ... They were always hungry."

"She wanted to tell me," Brooks said. "I was with her. She was more at peace."

When her mother was forced into the schools, she could speak English, French and Nishnawbe.

"When they got through with her, at residential school, the only thing she could speak was English," Brooks said.

Brooks said she and her mother watched [Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologize](#) in June 2008 for the government practice of forcing thousands of aboriginal children from their parents and communities into the schools.

"She lived to see that and we watched it together," Brooks said. "She said, 'What good is an apology if you keep doing the same things to each other?'"

Brooks said the commission's report must be followed up with action to improve First Nations education, water and food.

She said it's also past time to take a hard look into what can be done about [missing and murdered aboriginal women](#).

"I think it was an important first step, but I think we've got to undo the injustices and not just say we're sorry," Brooks said.

"Can you imagine what it was like for the kids who couldn't even say what happened?"

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/05/31/toronto-walk-marks-end-of-first-nations-truth-and-reconciliation-inquiry.html>

Her name is Arnaktauyok: A Q&A with a leading Inuit artist

Acclaimed Inuit artist Germaine Arnaktauyok talks about her life, including her own experience in residential schools, and a new book on her art and times

[John Geddes](#)

June 1, 2015



The prints and etchings of Germaine Arnaktauyok, 68, are among the most distinctive of any Inuit artist. A new book, [My Name is Arnaktauyok: The Life and Art of Germaine Arnaktauyok](#), combines many of those refined images with her biography. Arnaktauyok's story includes years in residential schools, the dark subject of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's](#) final report, which is scheduled to be released on June 2. She spoke with *Maclean's* from her home in Yellowknife.

In your book you describe living in the traditional Inuit way in your early childhood on the Melville Peninsula. Is your art rooted in those early memories?

I don't think so. Somehow I always liked art. I liked to sew, stuff like that. Somehow it just seems to be planted in my head.

Your prints often draw on Inuit legends, though. Do you have memories of hearing those stories as a little girl?

My father did tell me stories. Thunder and lightning is one I remember. The West. I don't remember every detail, because we'd always end up sleeping. We never knew what the ending was!

Did your family live off the land?

That's exactly how we lived. If the weather was good, my father was out with his dogs.

What did he hunt?

It was mostly seals, and then he had to go further inland to look for caribous.

You went away to residential school in Chesterfield Inlet when you were nine. How would you describe that experience?

The problem is I have trouble remembering those years when I was very young. I don't know why, maybe something happened to me.

In your book, you describe it as "pretty harsh," including being told not speak Inuktitut. But you also write about being introduced to painting there. How did that come about?

There was a nun who was, I think, more open. She knew how to play guitar. She liked to paint. She chose four of us to take oil painting every Sunday, and that's what we did.



Did you show early promise, do you think?

Art is easy for me to do. I don't know why. For some reason I found it easy to get my imagination going.

How long were you at the Chesterfield Inlet school?

Seven years.

Did you go home for summers?

Every summer. My parents were still living in a camp. So I would go back there.

So you kept a close connection with your family.

Yes, when I was little. Eventually, there was no bond anymore.

What happened?

I never went back after that when I was old enough. It was like I became a stranger. It got strained. For some reason, my parents never stopped me.

This would have been after you moved on to high school in Churchill, up in northern Manitoba. By then, did you know you wanted to be artist?

No. I didn't even know what an artist was. I just kept doing drawing. I never looked at it as my future. Kind of going along I guess.

In your book, you mention that a visiting Winnipeg art professor, George Swinton, saw your work. Was that the turning point?

I didn't meet him when he was in Churchill. He passed away a few years ago now. Very good man. Somebody thought I had potential so I said, Okay. So I moved to Winnipeg. That's when I started taking drawing at the University of Manitoba every Saturday. And that's how I started.

So was that when you started to think of yourself as an artist?

No.

No?

No. Two more years. I went full-time for two years in school. In second year my professor in painting, he was talking to me in his office, and he said I could make it. Maybe that's when I starting thinking, "Maybe I'll do art work."

You developed a very distinctive, polished style. How did that come about?

Well, after going to school in the south, when I moved to Iqaluit to work, I remember looking at carvings. They are flowing—nice flowy lines to them. I think that's where the line in my art came from.

Even though you have your own memories of traditional life and old stories, you are known for your meticulous research. I've read you've relied on illustrations from the explorer Knud Rasmussen's journals. How does research fit with your work as an artist?

I do look for old photographs and stories.

I like your etchings of different types of traditional kayaks, the women's knives called *uluit*, and old ivory combs. What is it that draws your eye to these objects?

Well, with those, the *uluit* or combs, I think I was trying to use different ones from different regions to show people that there were little groups of Inuit that had their own styles. Also, I was using it for design. I play around.

You've done prints of women adorned with the tattoos that were traditional for Inuit in the old days. Do you remember seeing these tattoos, or are you relying on archival images?

I knew one old lady when I was very young. That's the only memory I have of a person with a tattoo. The rest I researched—you know, how much would they tattoo their body parts. I do a lot of research.

Those tattoo designs are a lost thing, I guess.

A few young ladies actually have tattoos on their faces now. They're modern tattoos, but the way it was supposed to be done.

You've often depicted legends. Are these stories alive in your imagination, or is your goal to set them down for future generations?

When somebody is talking about the old legends, it's like watching a movie to me. I see stuff like that in my mind. And I can picture things right away.

Do you feel more connected to the old Inuit ways that you record or to the modern art world where you were trained and have had such success?

I know a little bit about traditional living and a little bit about modern living. So in between. That's what I lived through in my life.

Could I ask again about the residential schools era. That's part of your own story. How do you see it more broadly?

You know, some children had terrible times, so much abuse going on. We had to overcome that. It's part of our life now. You can't dismiss it, but it's a trail of your living. We all have a trail. Whatever happens, maybe we can use that as part of our growing up.

Who do you hope reads your book and what do you hope they get from it?

I hope young Inuit read it. They might not be doing this kind of art, the old legends and stuff. They might not be interested anymore. But hopefully, if they are interested in art,

they will get their own style. Everybody ends up with their own style. You can't copy somebody and tell yourself you are an artist.

Direct Link: <http://www.macleans.ca/culture/arts/her-name-is-arnaktauyok-a-qa-with-a-leading-inuit-artist/>

Stories, art help students explore legacy of residential schools

‘You were probably affected even if you didn’t go’

By Alexandra Zabjek, Edmonton Journal May 31, 2015

CALLING LAKE — There are few things that can silence a group of 400 chattering school students.

But the moment the Mountain Soul drummers pounded their sticks on a giant drum covered with buffalo hide, the children circled around them stopped talking.

They had come from five northern Alberta communities to a gym in Calling Lake to learn about their country’s past and absorb ideas their teachers hope will shape a different future.

The students were part of an education day about Canada’s residential schools — a system that’s had lasting and myriad effects in Calling Lake, a hamlet 210 kilometres north of Edmonton with a predominantly indigenous population and a burgeoning community of summer cottagers.

The group gathered two weeks before the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final report, a national event that is bringing politicians and dignitaries, including Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, to Ottawa for four days of events this week.

The commission spent six years examining the residential school system and hearing stories from survivors. The TRC event in Edmonton last year drew hundreds of people and resulted in a promise to these students — and all others in Alberta — from Alberta’s then-aboriginal relations minister Frank Oberle.

“Starting with the youngest members of our society, Alberta commits to residential school survivors, their families and communities, that Albertans will hear your stories and know your truths,” Oberle said.

All students from kindergarten to Grade 12 would learn about the painful legacies of the schools as part of the provincial curriculum, he said.

But official curriculum develops slowly, grinding through government before entering classrooms. Alberta Education said in an email last week that it is “beginning the process of meeting our commitment” from the TRC, and that it has been meeting with a new First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education division since last summer.

But that doesn’t mean individual schools and educators haven’t taken the stories, documents and teachings of the TRC into their classrooms already.

In Athabasca, the Landing Trail Intermediate School has about 400 students, a quarter of whom identify as having First Nation, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI) heritage. Many have grandparents who have told them about residential school.

But teachers didn’t always know how to broach the topic. What’s the best way to talk to eight-year-olds about forced family separation, racism and abuse?

“I had a Grade 4 student who asked if people died in there,” said Agnes Finney, the school’s FNMI liaison. “I was reluctant to answer, because yes, I had an aunt who died. I told her in a very gentle way.”

After the 2014 TRC event in Edmonton, staff at Landing Trail decided to spend the year teaching the residential school experience to students. Teachers went through two professional training days with Charlene Bearhead, the TRC’s education day co-ordinator, and classes approached the topic in ways that made sense for students.

All classes read the book *Fatty Legs*, about an Inuit girl’s experience at a residential school in the Arctic; the book’s authors visited the school in May. Other students made squares for a quilt based on what they learned. A local art council sewed together their work. Finney almost cried when she saw it.

Finney’s mother attended Holy Angels residential school in Fort Chipewyan for 10 years. She and her nine siblings grew up next to the school and always knew something “horrible” had happened there, but it took a long time to understand exactly what.

“My mother’s sister didn’t make it out,” Finney said. “I talk about (residential schools) in honour of my mother because she never spoke much about it, but we knew something horrible happened. It’s an important part of our history but that part of our history was blocked out and people are curious and they want to know.”

The education day in Calling Lake was “the topper on the cake” after a year of learning about the topic, Finney said. The Landing Trail students joined others from communities such as Smith, Bigstone Cree Nation and Wabasca at the Calling Lake multiplex.

The students moved between activities — a storytelling session with a Cree storyteller, a drumming session with the Mountain Soul group, a ledger arts session where students

were encouraged to use ledgers from the residential school era and draw new pictures on top.

“Ledger art is an old style of art that was done in the 1800s when the buffalo robes were all gone. The Plains people needed something else to use as an arts canvas,” said Lance Cardinal, an artist who recently returned to his hometown of Calling Lake after more than 10 years in Vancouver.

“In the ’60s and ’70s there was a resurgence of ledger art but this time it was more of a social commentary. Artists were using them specifically to erase the past and to create beautiful pieces on top, that are bright and vibrant and positive and hopeful.”

Some of the students drew flowers and trees, hearts and infinity symbols. In one piece, a girl wrote the word Kokum (grandmother) beside her own name, hearts surrounding both. In another piece, a boy drew four stick figures, their faces shaded blue. One figure is lying on the ground.

The student had learned about a group of boys who had run away from the residential school in Ermineskin to return to their homes in Ma-Me-O Beach. One of the boys drowned on the walk.

The story resonates with Angela Lightning, a member of the Ermineskin Cree Nation who has spent almost 19 years living and serving the community of Calling Lake. She played a key role in organizing the education day after a group of Calling Lake students attended the TRC in Edmonton. “It really inspired us to bring the message home,” she said.

“I know some people in the sharing circles say, ‘I didn’t go to residential schools so I wasn’t affected.’ I have to stand up and say, ‘You were probably affected even if you didn’t go,’” said Lightning, whose father and grandfather attended residential schools.

“Even me, my dad is still alive and I can talk to him, I learned so much through this process because a lot of times the survivors don’t want to talk about it, the old people don’t want to burden the young people with their stories. It’s heartbreaking — some of the things that came out, it’s heartbreaking. I’ve known this all my life and I’m still learning today. So if there are people out there who heard the term ‘residential school’ and never really put any thought into it, maybe today they learned something that will make them a better person.

And that’s simply all that we’re after.”

The drummers played as the students all stood. The younger kids and teenagers, some in ball caps and hoodies, all joined hands with their teachers, the instructors and the dancers.

They formed a circle that moved as one around the musicians in a round dance that brought everyone together before they prepared to leave Calling Lake and return to their home communities.

“With the closing ceremonies of the TRC coming up ... it’s becoming even more important that this kind of work happens in communities,” said Bearhead. “With the closing of the TRC, that really signifies the beginning of work in the communities.”

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Stories+help+students+explore+legacy+residential+schools/11097992/story.html>

Chair hopes TRC wind-up inspires new beginning for Canada

Murray Sinclair, Kathleen Wynne agree residential schools amounted to attempted cultural genocide

JIM BELL, June 01, 2015 - 6:10 am



More than 3,000 residential school survivors and their supporters poured across the Portage Bridge and Victoria Island in Ottawa May 31 in the Walk for Reconciliation. Some people estimated that up to 10,000 may have participated in the event, which included an afternoon of speeches and entertainment at Ottawa City Hall. (PHOTO BY JIM BELL)



“Never forget this day. Today is the day when we began to change the history of this country,” Justice Murray Sinclair said May 31 at the end of the Walk for Reconciliation. (PHOTO BY JIM BELL)



Members of the congregation of St. Margaret's Anglican Church in Ottawa, which many Inuit attend, display their solidarity with residential school survivors May 31 in Ottawa. (PHOTO BY JIM BELL)

Though the Truth and Reconciliation Commission he's chaired since 2009 will wind up its work this week, Justice Murray Sinclair urges all Canadians to build and maintain a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples that recognizes the truth of their common history.

“Never forget this day. Today is the day when we began to change the history of this country,” Sinclair said May 31 in a speech that followed a walk for reconciliation in Ottawa to mark the start of the TRC's closing public events this week.

More than 3,000 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people poured across the Portage Bridge and Victoria Island into downtown Ottawa at noon May 31, drumming, singing and bearing signs and banners displaying messages like “Breaking down walls for reconciliation” and “A new way forward.”

On June 2, the commission will release a 300-page executive summary of its final report at an event to be held inside the Delta hotel in Ottawa, where this week's TRC activities are focused.

“In that report, you will find the truth of residential school history in this country,” Sinclair said.

And he said that while getting to that truth was hard, achieving reconciliation will be even harder.

That's because getting many Canadians to accept the brutal reality of residential schools has been a difficult process.

It's still difficult for many Aboriginal survivors of residential schools as well because even now some people do not believe their stories, Sinclair said in his speech.

"We told them that telling the truth about residential schools was going to set them free, but first, we knew it was going to piss them off," Sinclair said.

"We knew that and it's turned out that a great deal of anger has been expressed over that story," he said.

Beverly McLachlin, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, sparked more anger in some quarters when she said in a speech given in Toronto last week that Canada's residential school system amounted to an attempt at committing cultural genocide.

Sinclair does not disagree, saying that if Canada were to develop its residential school system today, it could face prosecution under the 1948 UN convention on genocide.

Though the UN convention does not use the term "cultural genocide," a provision in Article II of the convention prohibits the forcible transfer of children, Sinclair said May 30 on the CBC radio current affairs program, The House.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, who also spoke at the end of the Walk for Reconciliation, said she agrees with McLachlin.

"She used the language of the 21st century to call this what it was, an attempted cultural genocide," Wynne said.

Sinclair said the commission will release its enormous final report later, after it's translated into various Aboriginal languages.

"We've finished writing it, but we're still trying to print it. It's going to cover two million words. The reason I know that is that we're going to have to pay the translators," Sinclair said.

It's based on documentary research and oral testimony gathered from thousands of residential school survivors since 2009, including [Inuit who appeared before a special Inuit sub-commission](#) that toured northern Canada in 2011, holding hearings in about 20 Inuit communities, many of them in Nunavut and Nunavik.

On that tour, the Inuit sub-commission heard evidence from survivors of the infamous Sir Joseph Bernier School in Chesterfield Inlet, to which many Inuit were sent between the late 1940s and 1960s.

In 2008, the late Marius Tungilik of Repulse Bay told *Nunatsiaq News* that Inuit who attended the Roman Catholic residential school at Chesterfield Inlet [“were treated like dogs” and told repeatedly that they belonged to a primitive, second-class race.](#)

The TRC also heard from [Inuit survivors of St. Phillip’s Residential School near Fort George](#) and hostels attached to federal school day schools that operated in Inukjuak, Kuujjuarapik, Kangiqsualujuaq, and Kangirsuk.

Numerous Inuvialuit and western Nunavut survivors attended a diverse range of residential schools, including Grolier Hall and Stringer Hall in Inuvik, and schools in such places as Aklavik, Yellowknife and Fort MacPherson.

The TRC gathered more than 1,000 survivor statements from Inuit and in another process, made common experience and independent assessment payments to thousands more.

The commission is not an agent of government, but the product of a settlement agreement financed from the [\\$2.1 billion out-of-court settlement agreement that Ottawa negotiated in 2006](#) with lawyers representing many thousands of residential school survivors.

The commission estimates that at least 150,000 Aboriginal people attended residential schools.

And in one of their most chilling findings, they estimate that at least 6,000 children, and likely more, died while attending those schools, many of them buried in unmarked graves without the knowledge of their families.

Direct Link: http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674chair_hopes_trc_wind-up_inspires_new_beginning_for_aboriginal_non-abor/

Truth and Reconciliation: Aboriginal people conflicted as commission wraps up after 6 years

#MyReconciliationIncludes hashtag shows skepticism many Aboriginal Peoples have

By Connie Walker, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 01, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Jun 01, 2015 2:24 PM ET



Nikamuwin Mianscum, 3, stands with drummers as they lead the Walk for Reconciliation, part of the closing events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Sunday in Ottawa and Gatineau. The commission uncovered horror stories of homemade electric chairs, malnutrition experiments and the deaths of more 6,000 children in residential schools. (Justin Tang/Canadian Press)

After six years of travelling the country to hear testimony from 7,000 witnesses about their experiences at residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission wraps up this week in Ottawa.

The final event kicked off yesterday with thousands of people participating in a reconciliation walk through the nation's capital. The summary of the commission's report will be released Tuesday.

"I never, ever envisioned that this would happen, that thousands of people would gather to give expression to the idea that we are ... all one," said Chief Robert Joseph, ambassador for Reconciliation Canada and a member of the National Assembly of First Nations elders council.

"And that includes me, somebody who was so terribly beat up in these residential schools that I felt absolutely worthless, no purpose in my life. And now here I am and I see all this humanity, and I'm inspired to my soul that people care enough to come out and walk with us today. And we walk together."

When the commission began in June 2010, there were high hopes it would help repair the relationship between aboriginal people and the rest of Canada. However, as the TRC winds down, many seem conflicted about the state of reconciliation in Canada.

About 150,000 children attended residential school over more than 100 years, starting in 1880s until the last school was closed in 1996. Many students as young children were forcibly removed from their families and sent to the schools to live. The commission heard thousands of statements about their experiences, which often included emotional, physical and sexual abuse.



Debbie Stephens holds an eagle feather as she pauses before the start of the walk for reconciliation in Gatineau. About 150,000 children attended residential school over more than 100 years, starting in 1880s until the last school was closed in 1996. (The Canadian Press)

Viv Ketchum, a survivor who travelled to Ottawa to attend the final TRC event, was hopeful after hearing Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology in 2008, but has since been disappointed by the process.



Vivian Ketchum, 51, attended Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in northern Ontario starting when she was 5. She came to Ottawa for the final TRC events this week. (CBC)

"I don't expect much to happen after, I don't think," she said. "This is just going to be one final hurrah for us and we're just going to be placed aside. I think that's the reality for us [survivors]."

Some of the truths about residential schools uncovered in the last six years include horror stories of homemade [electric chairs](#), [malnutrition experiments](#) and the deaths of more [6,000 children](#).

Justice Murray Sinclair, head of the commission, said that number is likely higher.

"Undoubtedly, the most shocking piece of information that we uncovered was the number of children who died in the schools," Sinclair said. "The number of children who died was a significant number, and we think that we have not uncovered anywhere near what the total would be because the record keeping around that question was very poor."

Final report

Sinclair will release a 300-page executive summary of the final report on Tuesday.

"The report itself — just by its size alone — is going to document as full a story of residential schools as has ever been documented in the past." Sinclair told CBC News last week.

- **Watch Peter Mansbridge interview Justice Murray Sinclair on [The National](#) tonight at 9 p.m. ET on CBC NN and 10 p.m. on CBC TV.**

The report will include recommendations, and many expect Sinclair to argue that Canada's treatment of aboriginal people in residential schools be deemed "cultural genocide."

In an interview with CBC's *Power and Politics* on Friday, Sinclair said the "evidence is mounting that the government did try to eliminate the culture and language of indigenous people for well over 100 years."



Truth and Reconciliation Commission chair Justice Murray Sinclair listens during the commission's British Columbia National Event in Vancouver, B.C., on Sept. 18, 2013. (Darryl Dyck/Canadian Press)

"They did it by forcibly removing from their families and placing them within institutions that were cultural indoctrination centres, really," he said. "That appears to us to fall within the definition of genocide — within the UN convention of genocide."

Last week, Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin also said Canada attempted "cultural genocide" against aboriginal people.

It's a term some residential school survivors themselves used when giving testimony about the abuse they endured in the schools. A volume of survivor testimony will be released in the final report, which will eventually contain six volumes and approximately two million words, according to Sinclair.

Vivian Ketchum has never told her full story at one of the national events. It is too painful for her to recount. She hesitated travelling to Ottawa to take part in the final event, but said she came to honour her ancestors.

"A lot of open wounds. A lot of memories are just coming back to me right now, some that I didn't even know were there," she said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/truth-and-reconciliation-aboriginal-people-conflicted-as-commission-wraps-up-after-6-years-1.3094753>

Residential school survivor and Anglican couple forge 'unlikely' friendship

Terry Aleck and John and Nancy Denham unite to hold reconciliation efforts in Sechelt, B.C.

By Duncan McCue, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 01, 2015 5:00 PM ET Last Updated: Jun 02, 2015 9:04 AM ET

Terry Aleck warms his hand drum, emblazoned with the crest of a killer whale, and calls for the *Family Song*.



Terry Aleck and Nancy and John Denham hold a monthly aboriginal drumming circle at Saint Hilda's Anglican church in Sechelt, B.C. (CBC)

"To honour my family back home, but this family here, too," Aleck said.

The other drummers in the circle smile. On cue, they raise their voice in song.

It's a bit unusual, because everyone else in the circle is non-aboriginal and this drum group congregates in a church. And Aleck is a survivor of abuse of the most violent kind at an Indian residential school.



Terry Aleck attended the St. Georges Indian Residential School in Lytton, B.C. where he suffered repeated sexual abuse. (CBC)

But none of that has stopped John and Nancy Denham, two members of Saint Hilda's Anglican Church in Sechelt, from joining forces with Aleck to educate members of their congregation and citizens in their town about the history of Indian residential schools in Canada.

"My relationship with Terry is unlikely, in that I'm a privileged white male. And Terry is not," says John Denham.

"As I heard more of his story, for him and I to connect, just seemed more and more unlikely."

Broken trust

Aleck's residential school experience is nothing short of horrific.

He was sent to St. George's Indian Residential School in Lytton, B.C. when he was in grade one. At age 9, he was raped by his dormitory supervisor Derrick Clarke. That abuse lasted for four years. Clarke later followed Aleck to Seattle, where the abuse continued through his teen years. It haunted Aleck for much of his adult life, and he turned to drugs and alcohol to ease the pain.



Historic shot of St. Georges Indian Residential School, which Terry Aleck attended. (Anglican Church)

"I buried that issue for 21 years in my life, then it squeaked out in treatment. That's when my journey began," says Aleck.

Aleck and six other survivors of St. George's sued the Anglican Church and the government of Canada in 1990, the first lawsuit of its kind in Canada. Eleven years later, Aleck would emerge victorious but still harbouring a deep distrust for all white people.

"That trust was broken when 9-year-old Terry was being abused by a white guy. From that age on, I couldn't trust for the longest time."

Shocked by history

The Denhams admit they didn't know much about residential schools, until they happened to stop by the first national event held by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Winnipeg in 2010.

"The realization that kids had been forced to go to schools and died there, was just unimaginable and that shocked me," said John Denham.

"I wanted to know more about that. How did it happen, why did it happen and what's going on? We got back and wanted to know more but where do you find that out?"

Upon returning to Sechelt, he attended a drum-making workshop held by Aleck. The two quickly became friends.

"I could see their compassion and their caring in the work they were doing," said Aleck, who had turned to aboriginal teachings for spiritual healing. "It was like, 'Wow! OK, let's journey.'"

"I do feel responsible for what is going on now. And things as tragic as residential school are still happening today."- *John Denham, member of Saint Hilda's Anglican Church*

Supported by Aleck's gentle nature and openness to share his residential school experiences, the Denham's have spent the past five years learning about residential schools and getting to know their aboriginal neighbours.

"I didn't really have anything to do with residential schools, personally," says John Denham. "To a certain extent, I don't feel guilty about that. But, I do feel responsible for what is going on now. And things as tragic as residential school are still happening today."

Efforts toward reconciliation

Since meeting Aleck, the Denhams have organized several residential school "dialogue circles" in Sechelt. They helped raised travel money for members of the Sechelt Indian Band to attend the TRC event in Vancouver. Two summers ago, John Denham took his grandson on a [Pulling Together](#) canoe journey.

As a more permanent gesture of reconciliation, the Denham's helped raise \$30,000 to commission a memorial to children who died at residential schools. The marble piece is being carved by Mohawk artist Michel Beauvais and will be raised on the Sechelt Indian Reserve at the site of the former Indian day school.

"We need to know how we built this country," says Nancy Denham. "And, as my Sechelt friends say, can we go forward in a good way?"



The Denham's are making a deer-hide vest for Aleck, for him to wear at the final TRC event in Ottawa (CBC)

The Denhams were also instrumental in convincing the Anglican Church to honour Aleck at the final Truth and Reconciliation event in Ottawa this week. They made a special

deer-hide vest for him for the occasion, hand sewn by Nancy and adorned with two-row wampum beaded by John, who says it's a small token of respect for his friend.

Reconciliation, he says, is a much longer, and sometimes rockier, endeavour.

"In some ways, this has been the easy part: hearing the truth," said John Denham. "Now comes the hard part."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/residential-school-survivor-and-anglican-couple-forge-unlikely-friendship-1.3093047>

Commission to chart map of rocky road to reconciliation

GLORIA GALLOWAY

OTTAWA — The Globe and Mail

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As the head of the commission probing past physical and sexual abuse at Indian residential schools prepares to release a long-awaited report this week, he acknowledges that national reconciliation will not be easily achieved.

Murray Sinclair, the chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, who will make public on Tuesday a summary into what occurred behind the schools' walls, says there was never any hope of achieving reconciliation within the five-year lifetime of his commission. But he will make recommendations, he says, about what the government and aboriginal people need to do to move in that direction.

"If you look at the conversations we have had with various individuals, they all talk about reconciliation being important and they all want it to happen and they say they want to be contributors to it," he said. "But we say it takes more than words. In addition to the apology, there has to be atonement and there has to be action."

Indigenous leaders take a much harsher view of the reconciliation process seven years after Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered his historic apology for the harms done to aboriginal children and the native community.

They accuse Ottawa and Department of Justice lawyers of putting the victims on trial, of withholding documents that could prove former students' tales of hardship as they apply

for compensation, and of creating an atmosphere of suspicion and hostility, calling into question the sincerity of the Prime Minister's statement of regret.

Aboriginal leaders say little has changed since the fanfare of June 11, 2008.

"We can point to a relationship with this government that is unnecessarily adversarial. They spent \$106-million last year in legal fees fighting aboriginal rights and treaty rights," said Perry Bellegarde, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. "The relationship has not improved to the point where we can say reconciliation has started."

The agreement between the government, the survivors of the schools, and the churches that ran them, is the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. It has resulted in billions of dollars in compensation for those who were deprived of their families and their culture, and in many cases subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

For its part, the government says it is living up to the responsibilities to residential-school survivors.

"As Prime Minister Harper said in his historic apology on behalf of all Canadians in 2008, there is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential schools system to ever prevail again," Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt said in an e-mail. "That's why our government is committed to fulfill its obligations as set out in the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement as well as continue to bring forward concrete measures that will help improve the well-being of aboriginal Canadians."

The settlement agreement requires Ottawa to search for any information it has about wrongdoing at the institutions to bolster the claims of those seeking financial redress, something many observers say is an obligation the government has been reluctant to address.

Justice Sinclair himself ended up successfully taking the government to court in 2013 to force it to scour its archives for millions of documents related to the schools that operated in Canada for more than a century. The result, he said, was a "fire hose" of unsorted data and documents aimed at the TRC that is now being organized for inclusion in the new National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba.

And there have been other legal actions with similar objectives.

Last year, after telling compensation adjudicators since 2007 there was no record of sexual abuse at St. Anne's Indian Residential School in Fort Albany, Ont. – where such activity was rampant and children as young as six were shocked in an electric chair and made to eat their own vomit – the government was forced to admit to Justice Paul Perrell of the Ontario Superior Court that it was withholding thousands of OPP and other documents about abuse at the school. Justice Perrell ordered them to be released.

Now, in another cases from another school – Bishop Horden in Moose Factory, Ont. – many students allege there was abuse in the 1960s that resulted in criminal charges against supervisors.

No documents were produced by the government to that effect. And, in the past few months, government officials were forced to admit under oath that no effort has actually been made to search for the records of residential-school abuse that exist within most federal departments including the RCMP, Justice and Health Canada. Justice Perrell has yet to make a ruling in that case.

Fay Brunning, the lawyer for the Bishop Horden survivors, says the result of non-compliance may mean that many victims of the residential-school system were unfairly denied compensation or were under-compensated and that their cases may have to be thrown out and reheard.

As a former residential school student making a claim for having been abused, “if you are sitting in your hearing and the RCMP have a report that supports you, you are going to be believed,” said Ms. Brunning. “But the flip side is also true. If you say in your application that the police were involved and the federal government says it has no documents, it looks like you are either mistaken or lying.”

Kathleen Mahoney, a Calgary-based lawyer who helped negotiate the settlement agreement, says there has been a discernible shift “for the worse” over the past three years in terms of the way in which the files of claimants are treated by the government.

The claims assessment process was intended to be non-adversarial. Instead, said Ms. Mahoney, Justice department lawyers “take certain positions that are really, really difficult for people” by demanding that the adjudicators ask many questions that could poke holes in the stories of abuse.

“The promise was that when [the school survivors] went through this adjudicative process they would be believed, unless there was some reason not to believe them that was obvious,” she said. “It’s not meant to be a criminal trial or a very difficult process for elderly people who are trying to remember something that happened to them 65 years ago when they were a child.”

As for the Prime Minister’s apology, said Ms. Mahoney, Mr. Harper said the government was genuinely sorry and wanted to make amends. “Well that’s really hard when you become hyper-aggressive and adversarial in a process that was not designed to be that.”

The government has also spent years defending a case before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal that was brought by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society which says the money provided by Ottawa for aboriginal child and family services is significantly less than the amounts the provinces provide to help non-aboriginal families in need.

“We want them to provide equitable funding for child welfare so that kids can grow up safely in their families, so that First Nations families have the same chance to raise their kids safely at home as other families do in Canada,” said Cindy Blackstock, the Caring Society’s executive director.

Ms. Blackstock said she is simply looking for “equity.” Instead, she said, the government has fought “tooth and nail using millions of dollars. So far we know that they have spent at least \$5-million on legal fees alone.”

Phil Fontaine, the former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations who was the prime mover behind the settlement agreement, says there is still much work to do. He points out there are now three times as many aboriginal children in state care as there were at the height of the residential-school experience. There is also rampant poverty on reserves, high suicide and incarceration rates, inadequate housing and long-standing boil-water advisories.

There will never be reconciliation between Canada and its aboriginal peoples, Mr. Fontaine says, as long as those types of socioeconomic imbalances remain.

The words of the apology that were spoken by the Prime Minister were “powerful,” he said. “And the people were willing to accept that as a sincere apology. But they also expected that actions would follow those words.”

Canada is, instead, a long way from reconciliation with its indigenous peoples, said Mr. Fontaine. “There are promises to keep. And we will never bring about reconciliation until those promises have been kept.”

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/reconciliation-with-first-nations-requires-more-than-words-commission-chair/article24716835/>

Perry Bellegarde, AFN chief, says reconciliation means closing poverty gap

Reconciliation means closing poverty gap and acknowledging genocide, says AFN chief

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 01, 2015 12:56 PM ET Last Updated: Jun 01, 2015 6:11 PM ET



AFN Grand Chief Perry Bellgarde said treaty and aboriginal rights should be a part of school curriculums from kindergarten through Grade 12 across Canada. (CBC News)

Closing the social and economic gap is a linchpin in reconciliation between aboriginal people and the rest of Canada, AFN Grand Chief Perry Bellgarde said Monday on the eve of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission releasing its final report.

"I urge everybody across Canada to rid themselves of things like the misconceptions about indigenous peoples, the discriminatory, racist attitudes that may exist, to move them out so that new things may come in," Bellgarde said at a news conference in Ottawa.

"We do have a shared history, and we do have a shared responsibility going forward."

A march in Ottawa on Sunday drew thousands of aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, drawing attention to this week's conclusion of the six-year-long Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which will release its final report and recommendations on Tuesday after hearing testimony from 7,000 former students of residential schools.

The march was "a very powerful testament about what we can do when we start working together to bring about change in this country," Bellgarde said.

What reconciliation requires

Reconciliation requires that the truth to be told about residential schools and their devastating inter-generational social fallout, Bellegarde added.

Residential schools were "a dark chapter in Canadian history. It is cultural genocide. Recognizing this should frame future aboriginal policy," he said.

Further, Bellegarde said treaty and aboriginal rights should be a part of school curriculums from kindergarten through Grade 12 across Canada. But resuscitating the country's 58 aboriginal languages should be a priority, he said.

"If there can be just as much effort to enhance, preserve and promote indigenous languages as there was to get rid of them that would really be reconciliation," Bellgarde said.

Reconciliation can't proceed while First Nations are mired in the "poverty that plagues our people," he said.

According to Bellgarde, one in four First Nations children live in poverty, 120 First Nations communities are under boil water advisories and only 35 per cent of aboriginal students graduate.

"When we close the gap that's good for everybody. When you invest in education and proper housing that's good for everybody," he said.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was struck in 2009, to study the legacy of Indian residential schools in Canada.

In the past six years, the commissioners interviewed more than 7,000 people across the country. The final report, which will be released Tuesday, will span six volumes and more than two million words.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/perry-bellegarde-afn-chief-says-reconciliation-means-closing-poverty-gap-1.3095407>

Thousands join residential school survivors in reconciliation walk

By [Derek Leahy](#) in [News](#) | June 1st 2015



Photo of Ottawa Truth and Reconciliation

Canadian Indigenous elders lit the sacred fire on Victoria Island as the sun rose over the Ottawa River yesterday. The island, a stone's throw away from Parliament Hill, was made famous by Chief Theresa Spence and her hunger strike during the winter Canada was introduced to Idle No More.

By noon 10,000 First Nations, Metis, Inuit and non-Indigenous Canadians were marching in the national capital with the same spirit and determination of the Indigenous-powered movement that swept through the nation in from 2012-13.

Those from across the country who marched in Ottawa yesterday did so not in political protest, but in hopes that the gaping wounds 150 years of "Indian" residential schools have left on Canada will one day heal.

"This is the day we begin to change the history of this country," Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada told thousands on the doorstep of Ottawa's City Hall.

"Getting to the truth is hard. Getting to reconciliation is even harder."

Former Northwest Territories premier Stephen Kakfwi, a member of the Dene Nation who participated in yesterday's Walk for Reconciliation, knows firsthand that reconciliation and healing is not an easy road. He is a residential school survivor.

Kakfwi said it was only recently he was able to forgive the two men who abused him during the time he spent at a residential school as a child. Since forgiving his abusers he feels as if he walks lighter, sleeps better and has even become a better husband.

His wife, Marie Wilson, is one of three Truth and Reconciliation commissioners.

"Reconciliation is acceptance of what happened to so many of us in Canada, so we can unlock the focal tension of this country and move forward," Kakfwi told the *National Observer*.



All three TRC Commissioners — Sinclair, Wilson and Wilton Littlechild – were on hand for the walk, along with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, former NHLer Joe Juneau, Olympian Clara Hughes and dozens of Indigenous leaders and elders.

The march was the inaugural event of three days of closing ceremonies on the commission's work to be held in Ottawa. After seven years and thousands of residential school survivors' testimonies, the commission is finally prepared to deliver its report on one of the darkest chapters of Canadian history.

Premier Wynne described the residential school system as an “evil” so vile and so pandemic it has adversely impacted multiple generations of First Nations, Metis and Inuit.

“By unearthing it and truly understanding it we give ourselves the power to change the future,” Wynne said.

Premier Wynne and Justice Sinclair both echoed the words of Canada's top judge, chief justice of the Supreme Court Beverly McLachlin, who said last week that the residential school system was an attempt at “cultural genocide” directed at the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

Over 150,000 First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children were taken from their families and forced into a residential school system designed and implemented by the federal government to 'take the Indian out of the child.' The last residential school finally closed in 1998.

At least 6,000 died from disease and malnutrition while in the residential schools, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Abuse was widespread during those years. The commission's findings and testimonies of survivors have revealed students were physically and sexually abused in the schools.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper formally apologized in 2008 for the wrongs committed against residential school students.

“You do not have to believe reconciliation will happen, you have to believe reconciliation should happen,” Justice Sinclair declared in his closing remarks.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will release its final report on June 2nd in Ottawa. The report details what happened in the schools themselves as well as recommendations on how Canada can come to terms with this part of the past.

Justice Sinclair described the report as the largest oral history project in Canadian history. It is over two million words in length.

“Everybody is on a healing journey, but to heal ourselves takes practice,” Josee Whiteduck, an Anishinaabe elder from Kitigan Zibi First Nation in nearby Quebec, said. Whiteduck opened yesterday’s march with a prayer in English and Anishinaabe.

“I am hopeful for myself and for others. We all need to move on in life,” said Whiteduck.

Direct Link: <http://www.nationalobserver.com/2015/06/01/news/thousands-join-residential-school-survivors-reconciliation-walk>

The living legacy of residential schools through the life of a homeless Inuk man

[National News](#) | June 1, 2015 by [Kenneth Jackson](#)



(Tuqiqi Osuitok, right, with his late father Osuitok Ipeelee, whose carvings are part of the National Gallery of Canada collection.)

Kenneth Jackson

APTN National News

OTTAWA —Tuqiqi Osuitok’s eyes can just be seen under the brim of his red hat as he looks up at people walking by, hoping they’ll drop some coins in his open hands.

He’s sitting on the sidewalk along Sussex Drive near Rideau, in downtown Ottawa, and just down the street from where hundreds of residential school survivors gather at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ceremonies.

Osuitok isn’t going, but he’s one of them.

“Most of us have same stories. We went through hell,” says the 62-year-old Inuk man, and son of the late prominent carver Osuitok Ipeelee.

Ipeelee's carvings are part of the National Gallery of Canada collection.

"He was my best friend," says Osuitok, also a carver.

He says he was put in a residential school in Cape Dorset in the late 1950s.

They were called "federal hostels" in Nunavut.

"I was six and it was very hard," he recalls. "They (teachers) spoke in English and you weren't allowed to speak in your mother tongue."

He said he suffered abuse at the hands of the teachers, physical and sexual.

The legacy of residential schools was kept quiet for generations. But over the last few decades the effect they've had on First Nation, Metis and Inuit people has become public.

Osuitok may be a prime example – tormented to this day he suffers from the memories.

"Sometimes I get flashbacks. Nothing you can do really except try to stay calm," he says. "You get lots of anger towards the white people."

He's hit the bottle hard and has found himself in Ottawa, on and off, for the last 42 years.

Many times on the streets or in shelters.

"It really kills your life. You don't want to do anything after," he said.

He remembers wanting to be a doctor or a police man as a young child.

"The dream never came true. I had too much damage," he said.

He's been in trouble with the law, another effect of residential schools – something the Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed attributes to the high number of Aboriginal people before the courts.

"Anything serious?"

He nods. "Yes, bad, bad stuff."

“Murder?”

He shakes his head.

“Sex crimes?”

“Yes, sexual assaults,” he says – his eyes now red and welling up.

A victim himself, Osuitok says he was sexually assaulted between the ages of 12-14 at the school.

“The woman teacher sexually abused me,” he says.

He said his sister and brother also attended the school. They’re both deceased now he says. His sister drowned and his brother committed suicide.

He can’t stay any longer and needs to get to the Ottawa Mission shelter to get medical treatment.

Years of drinking have given him ulcers.

And the little man in a red hat walks across Rideau street carrying with him the living legacy of residential schools.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/06/01/living-legacy-residential-schools-life-homeless-inuk-man/>

Aboriginal leaders, opposition parties demand 'real action' on residential schools report



CTVNews.ca Staff

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Aboriginal leaders and opposition parties are urging the federal government to immediately act after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released an executive summary of its report Tuesday.

The commission's [report on Canada's residential schools](#) found that the system amounted to "cultural genocide" by forcibly removing aboriginal children from their families, customs and identities.

During question period in the House of Commons Tuesday, NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair said Prime Minister Stephen Harper's 2008 apology to First Nations is "only meaningful if it is accompanied by real action."

Mulcair asked Harper how he planned to respond to the TRC report and whether he agreed with the finding that the residential school system was "nothing short of cultural genocide."

Harper did not directly answer the question, but said that the Conservative government has made "multiple actions over the years" to improve the lives of aboriginal people in Canada, including funding for education programs.

Harper said the residential schools were "a policy of forced assimilation that not only destroyed the lives of individuals, but of entire families and society and it has had long last implications on entire communities in this country."

Speaking at a TRC news conference shortly before question period, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt said he's "confident that we can build on the work that has been done."

He said that Canada wants to "reaffirm" its commitment to reconciliation and will continue to work with aboriginal groups and leaders.

Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau also pressed Harper on the TRC report during question period, saying that his party accepts all of the [commission's 94 recommendations](#).

Harper said his government will first examine the recommendations before deciding “the next steps.”

Perry Bellegarde, the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, told a TRC news conference Tuesday that residential school survivors and their families deserve “nothing less than transformative change.”

He said that without government action, Harper's words from 2008 will end up being an “empty, meaningless apology.”

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/aboriginal-leaders-opposition-parties-demand-real-action-on-residential-schools-report-1.2403076>

Skepticism meets minister's call for partnership with aboriginals

[Lee Berthiaume, Ottawa Citizen](#) More from [Lee Berthiaume, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: June 1, 2015

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt stood all but alone Monday as he marked the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and called for a long-term partnership between Canada's indigenous and non-aboriginal people.

Surrounded by empty Conservative seats in the House of Commons, Valcourt said that while the commission's work was coming to a close, “the work to heal the relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians must continue.

“Reconciliation is a goal that will take the commitment of multiple generations, and the Government of Canada understands the importance of transformation — how it works with aboriginal people and shifting attitudes and perceptions among all Canadians,” he added.

The commission spent six years examining the residential school system, in which the federal government sent aboriginal children to church-run schools, where many faced physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

It is expected to propose far-reaching changes Tuesday to restore trust between the country and its First Nations, and to help improve the lives of aboriginals in areas such as health, education and justice.

Many aboriginals are also hoping it serves to open the eyes of non-aboriginal Canadians who have looked down upon the country's indigenous people, and help end racism and discrimination while prompting real action to address the challenges facing First Nations communities.

"I believe that it'll help open people's eyes in the sense that most people will say, 'When are the Indians going to get over it?'" Assembly of First Nations national chief Perry Bellegarde said Monday.

"When people get the impact that we suffered through from residential schools and the Indian Act, and cultural genocide, they'll be more open to bring about real reconciliation."

NDP MP Romeo Saganash, who is a residential school survivor, called upon the government, and all Canadians, to "seize" the opportunity that will come when the commission's report is released Tuesday "and collectively commit to genuine change in our relations with the first peoples of this country."

"Let us set out to do what 148 years of successive governments have not managed to achieve," Saganash said in the House of Commons, "and that is reconciliation."

About 30 NDP MPs sat with Saganash as he spoke. About 10 Liberal MPs and fewer than 20 Conservative MPs were also in attendance.

Valcourt pledged the federal government "will continue its efforts to advance reconciliation," but did not provide any specific details. The minister is expected to respond to the commission's specific recommendations Tuesday.

Yet hopes for real action are in short supply, and not simply because it seemed most Conservative MPs, including the majority of cabinet ministers, had better things to do than listen to Valcourt's statement in the House on Monday — though that didn't help.

"They were nice words that were pronounced by the minister today in the House," Saganash told the Citizen in an interview. "But there was no one behind the minister while he was speaking on this issue. I hope it's not an indication of what they think about aboriginal peoples in this country and reconciliation."

The Conservative government has previously rejected calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. It also introduced a bill to reform aboriginal education last year and promised extra funds, but set it aside when aboriginal organizations opposed it for a variety of reasons.

Bellegarde said it would be "difficult" for true reconciliation without an inquiry, as well as additional money for First Nations' education and housing, and "a respectful process to engage with the Crown, especially when it comes to education. It's not good enough to unilaterally impose legislation."

Liberal aboriginal affairs critic Carolyn Bennett said she hopes to see the Conservative government announce a bold plan for reconciliation Tuesday.

“I will be thrilled if that is rolled out tomorrow,” she said. “But I somehow feel that based on their track record, we will be disappointed.”

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/skepticism-meets-ministers-call-for-partnership-with-aboriginals>

Canada's Forced Schooling of Aboriginal Children Was 'Cultural Genocide,' Report Finds

By [IAN AUSTEN](#) JUNE 2, 2015



Aboriginal Canadians were forced to attend boarding schools like this one in the Northwest Territories, shown around 1936. Credit Library and Archive of Canada

OTTAWA — [Canada](#)'s former policy of forcibly removing aboriginal children from their families for schooling “can best be described as ‘cultural genocide.’ ”

That is the conclusion reached by the country's [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) after six years of intensive research, including 6,750 interviews. The commission published a [summary version](#) on Tuesday of what will ultimately be a multivolume report, documenting widespread physical, cultural and sexual abuse at government-sponsored residential schools that Indian, Inuit and other indigenous children were forced to attend.

The schools, financed by the government but run largely by churches, were in operation for more than a century, from 1883 until the last one closed in 1998.

The commission documented that at least 3,201 students died while attending the schools, many because of mistreatment or neglect, in the first comprehensive tally of such deaths.

The report linked the abuses at the schools, which came to broad public attention over the last four decades, to social, health, economic and emotional problems affecting many indigenous Canadians today. It concluded that although some teachers and administrators at the schools were well intentioned, the overriding motive for the program was economic, not educational.

“The Canadian government pursued this policy of cultural genocide because it wished to divest itself of its legal and financial obligations to aboriginal people and gain control over their lands and resources,” the report said. “If every aboriginal person had been ‘absorbed into the body politic,’ there would be no reserves, no treaties and no aboriginal rights.”

The Canadian government [apologized to former students](#) in a landmark 2008 court settlement and established the commission to document what had happened and to reconcile [Canada](#)’s native and nonnative peoples.

The commission, led by Justice Murray Sinclair, an Ojibwa who was the first aboriginal judge in the province of Manitoba, said Tuesday that it would take considerable effort and significant social, legal and political changes to achieve that mandate.

“A just reconciliation requires more than simply talking about the need to heal the deep wounds of history,” the report said. “Words of apology alone are insufficient; concrete actions on both symbolic and material fronts are required.”

In contrast, the commission found that “all too often, policies and programs are still based on faded notions of assimilation.”

In its report, the commission offered 94 recommendations, including an overhaul of the child welfare system for aboriginal children, which continues to produce cases of abuse and neglect, and a change in Canada’s oath of citizenship to include a promise to “faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including treaties with indigenous peoples.”

A principal recommendation is a step that has long been a sore point between aboriginal groups and the government. The report repeatedly calls on the government to fully adopt the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) as the basis of a new relationship.

Canada, along with the United States, Australia and New Zealand, has been reluctant to take that step, saying instead that the country endorses the declaration only as a “non-legally-binding aspirational document.”

The major sticking point is the declaration's requirement that issues involving the lands, territories and resources of aboriginal people be subject to their "prior and informed consent." The government is concerned that the requirement would essentially give aboriginal groups a sweeping veto over Canadian law.

The commission said, however, that the declaration affirmed rights already held by native groups under treaties with the government and was consistent with recent decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada related to aboriginal rights.

Aboriginal groups and the government see reconciliation very differently, the report said: The government appears to believe that it involves aboriginal people's accepting "the reality and validity" of the government's power "in order to allow the government to get on with business."

"Aboriginal people, on the other hand, see reconciliation as an opportunity to affirm their own sovereignty and return to the 'partnership' ambitions they held," the report said.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government has had a strained relationship with indigenous people, even though it was Mr. Harper who made the apology in 2008. When a reporter at a news conference on Tuesday asked whether the Conservatives were at all likely to adopt the commission's recommendations, Justice Sinclair said, "We are writing for the future, not just for this government," a remark that met with prolonged applause and cheers from the largely aboriginal audience.

Bernard Valcourt, the aboriginal affairs minister, said Tuesday: "This dark chapter in Canada's history has left a mark on our country. I'm confident that we can build on the important work that's been done and continue to heal as a nation."

Leaders of the Protestant churches that ran many of the schools apologized long ago. But the report and Justice Sinclair urged Pope Francis to formally take that step for the Roman Catholic Church, which ran some of the schools, saying that apologies from local Catholic officials were not enough.

The research and interviews conducted by the commission detailed a boarding school system that was woefully underfunded, inadequately staffed and largely ineffective at its stated aim of providing useful education.

Some former students interviewed by the commission cited school sports and music and arts programs as bright spots in their lives. But those programs were not generally part of the system, and most former students, even those who were not physically or sexually harmed or neglected, said their daily lives had been heavily regimented and lacked privacy and dignity. At many of the schools, students were addressed and referred to by number as if they were prisoners.

“In the school, I didn’t have a name,” Lydia Ross, a former student, told the commission. “I had No. 51, No. 44, No. 32, No. 16, No. 11 and then finally No. 1, when I was just coming to high school.”

The commission found that the government had in effect blocked criminal investigations of some sexual predators employed at the schools. The report documented widespread bullying and beating involving both staff members and older students.

Many staff members were paid poorly, and the government justified the policy by arguing that “because many employees belonged to missionary organizations, pay was a ‘minor consideration,’ ” the commission found. Nuns at one school in the 1960s were paid just \$50 a month, the report said, a situation that made its principal “feel like a heel.”

The report documented instances in which students tried to burn down their schools or died after running away from schools in remote locations. Justice Sinclair said at the news conference that although the commission was able to document 3,201 student deaths, research suggested that 6,000 or more may have died.

A disproportionate number of aboriginal people are imprisoned in Canada, and aboriginal children account for a much larger part of the child welfare system’s caseload than their share of the population. The commission said both of those trends were consequences of the regimented residential school system.

People raised in the schools, the report said, “sometimes found it difficult to become loving parents.” Those who were abused often went on to abuse other people as adults, or fell victim to substance abuse.

“Students who were treated and punished like prisoners in the schools often graduated to real prisons,” the commission wrote. “For many, the path from residential school to prison was a short one.”

Direct Link: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/03/world/americas/canadas-forced-schooling-of-aboriginal-children-was-cultural-genocide-report-finds.html?_r=0

How many First Nations kids died in residential schools? Justice Murray Sinclair says Canada needs answers

Ottawa stopped recording deaths around 1920, after a medical officer drew attention to the alarming statistics — and was fired.



Truth and Reconciliation commissioner Murray Sinclair, in a black suit, marches along with Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde (in headdress) in an Ottawa march on Sunday that was part of the closing events of the commission's work. The event drew about 7,000 participants.

By: Chinta Puxley The Canadian Press, Published on Sun May 31 2015

The commission that has spent five years examining one of the darkest chapters in Canada's history is winding up its work with a key question left unanswered — exactly how many aboriginal children died in residential schools?

Justice Murray Sinclair, who heads the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, says the federal government stopped recording the deaths around 1920, after the chief medical officer at Indian Affairs suggested children were dying at an alarming rate.

"He was fired," Sinclair says. "The government stopped recording deaths of children in residential schools, we think, probably because the rates were so high."

Sinclair has guessed up to 6,000 children may have died at the schools but it's impossible to say with certainty.

"We think this is a situation that needs further study," he said.

More than 130 years after the first residential schools were established to "take the Indian out of the child," the commission is to release a summary of its six-volume final report on Tuesday. It will include testimony from survivors, as well as numerous recommendations to address the legacy of forced assimilation.

The commission didn't originally intend to examine how many children never came home, but it quickly emerged as an issue, Sinclair says.

Schools were often crowded, poorly ventilated and unsanitary. Children died from smallpox, measles, influenza and tuberculosis. Some were buried in unmarked graves in school cemeteries, while others were listed as "missing" or "discharged." In some cases, parents never found out what happened.

Some provinces handed over death certificates to the commission, but Sinclair says the work is far from over.

“We have recommendations around that in the report. We’re going to tell you there are lots of records out there that are missing.”

About 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Metis children were taken from their families and forced to attend government schools over much of the last century.

The \$60-million commission was part of a landmark compensation deal between Ottawa, the Crown and residential school survivors. It visited hundreds of communities and heard testimony from 7,000 survivors, including graphic details of rampant sexual and physical abuse.

The legacy of the schools is evident today, Sinclair says. High poverty rates, a large number of aboriginal children in foster care, a disproportionate number of aboriginals in jail and hundreds of missing and murdered aboriginal women can all be traced back to residential schools, he suggests.

National Chief Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations says part of reconciliation is ensuring that aboriginal children have the same quality of life as everyone else. If that doesn’t happen, he says, Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s historic 2008 apology to residential school survivors will mean nothing.

“If we’re going to talk about reconciliation, there really has to be action attached to the apology.”

The churches that ran the majority of the schools have promised to work toward reconciliation.

In a letter from the Ottawa archdiocese, released by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Terrence Prendergast calls on the faithful to repent for how the church treated aboriginal people.

“We face the past and sincerely ask for forgiveness,” the letter reads.

The Anglican Church of Canada apologized to students and their families in 1993.

“We’ve been trying to live into that apology ever since,” the church says on a website dedicated to reconciliation.

Some worry the commission is ending its work before real healing has begun.

Manitoba Aboriginal Affairs Minister Eric Robinson was sent to a residential school when he was 5 and left when he was 9 — one of the lucky ones, he says.

The number of children who died at residential schools is just one of the areas that needs more exploration, he says. The medical experiments conducted on children, as well as forced military training, should also be properly studied.

“Five or six years is hardly enough time to ascertain a century and more of hurt and punishment inflicted upon Indian people. We almost need a permanent forum.”

Sinclair says the responsibility to repair the relationship with aboriginal people rests with Canadians.

“It’s the people talking at the community level, the need to overcome racism that people have been raised with, overcoming the stereotypes.

“One of their first obligations is to recognize they are in a relationship with aboriginal people that is like no other.”

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/05/31/how-many-first-nations-kids-died-in-residential-schools-justice-murray-sinclair-says-canada-needs-answers.html>

We’ll get the truth on First Nations, but reconciliation remains elusive

Bob Rae

Special to The Globe and Mail

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Bob Rae is former premier of Ontario and a former member of Parliament. He is a partner at Olthuis Kleer Townshend, a law firm that acts for First Nations across Canada, and teaches at the University of Toronto School of Public Policy and Governance.

This week Canadians will be reminded once again about what the Supreme Court of Canada Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin last week [called](#) “the greatest stain on our human rights record,” the “cultural genocide” that dates back to the colonial period and that has persisted for far too long.

The use of the “g” word has caused some consternation, but there can be no doubt that the deliberate purpose of public policy in Canada, found both in the Indian Act, the residential schools policy and the way in which treaties were interpreted and administered by both federal and provincial governments was based on the assumption that the only

possibility of long term survival was assimilation as individuals to the culture of the majority.

The 1948 Genocide Convention, to which Canada is a signatory, defines genocide as “the intent to destroy, in whole or part” a group by killing its members, by imposing destructive conditions of life, or, significantly, by “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

This is a matter of historical record. These were policies promoted by the political leaders of the day, and supported by the majority of Canadians. There is no point in denying the truth or the consequences of what has been done.

The assumption of that time was that the culture of the aboriginal people was savage and barbaric, and that the only hope for the future was to remove children from their families, to put them in schools where their aboriginal personality would be destroyed and to provide them with the skills and culture that would give them a chance to assimilate.

This policy lasted for the better part of a century, and it was an unmitigated disaster and failure, an experiment in social engineering that destroyed lives, hopes, character and opportunity.

The churches of the day played a critical part in this experiment, running schools across the country and being the executors of the will of the state and the Canadian public. As a consequence the Christian churches of Canada bear a heavy responsibility for what happened, and the consequences with which we live today as Canadians.

The point of all this is not to inflict guilt, but rather to understand what has happened and what can now be done to begin reconciliation. It starts with an apology, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper was both eloquent and sincere when he did that in the House of Commons in 2008. But it hardly ends there. The apology has to be matched by a commitment to action, and a mending of our ways as a country. It is in the action that we are lacking, both federally, provincially and most important in the lack of political will and commitment across the country.

We are a settler country whose original inhabitants can trace their ancestry back on this land thousands of years. They ignored the fact that First Nations people had their own laws, customs, governance and way of life. They ignored their spirituality, and worse, insisted that their own was better. They did not see them as equals, or even as equally human. We need to understand this, and ask ourselves the question: Have we completely eliminated these thoughts, attitudes and values from our own views today?

If we are honest, we have to admit that these attitudes do not disappear, or even change, easily and the fact that indigenous people are in a minority makes it easier for the majority to fall back into the easy complacency of believing that the abuses of the past are over. I heard someone suggest that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission could

lead to “closure” of what has happened, as if we could put this in a box and “put it behind us.”

First Nations still come to governments of the majority as supplicants. The Indian Act is still the law of Canada, a monument of hypocrisy, discrimination and paternalism. It denies First Nations the jurisdiction, the revenue and the land to become effective governments. Both federal and provincial governments persist in their interpretation of laws and treaties in a way that forces indigenous people and their governments to go to court to seek their rights and title.

There are more First Nations children in care today than there were in residential schools, and in education, health care and resource management the recognition of aboriginal jurisdiction languishes in negotiations that go on interminably. This is not a legacy attached to any one political party. It is, tragically, widely and deeply shared across the political spectrum. The country is mired in denial and paralysis.

There is a way forward, and there are fortunately many who are helping to define a positive agenda of change, self-government or a fair and just sharing of resources and a willingness to recognize the need for justice. But it is a way that will require change.

We are now debating as a country the “truth” part of the issue, after generations of silence. But the question is not just “what happened?” It is also “what is to be done?”

The path ahead is not just about politics, it is a change of heart and mind that starts with each and every one of us, that understands that these challenges are not buried in our past but are alive today in our own behaviour and attitudes.

This is adapted from a talk given at a joint service of Bloor Street and Trinity St. Paul’s United Churches on May 31.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/well-get-the-truth-on-first-nations-but-reconciliation-remains-elusive/article24744416/>

Inuit groups urge action following TRC report

"Now we have been given the whole story and a blueprint to recovery"

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, June 03, 2015 - 2:18 pm



The Truth and Reconciliation report receives applause June 2 in Ottawa. Inuit groups in Nunavut and Nunavik have commended the report, calling it the beginning of the reconciliation process. (PHOTO BY JIM BELL)

Inuit organizations in Nunavut and Nunavik say the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is just the beginning of a healing process for families across Canada's North.

[The TRC released its long-awaited report June 2](#), summarizing testimony from more than 6,000 Aboriginal residential school survivors, documenting accounts of discrimination and deprivation along with physical, sexual, emotional and mental abuse.

That report, issued by Justice Murray Sinclair, makes 94 recommendations to all levels of government, while urging Canadians to embrace the principle of reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous people.

Now, with that truth made public for all Canadians to see, reconciliation can begin, said Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. President Cathy Towtongie.

"It is of vital importance that Justice Sinclair's report, which details the horrible realities of residential school, becomes part of the conversation in all Canadian households," Towtongie said in a June 2 release.

"All Canadians have a personal responsibility to learn about this time in Canadian history in order to better understand the lasting impacts and legacy that residential schools continue to have on a large percentage of this country's Aboriginal population," she said.

"We still have much grieving to do for this time in our lives and our families and our history, and must continue to work to find ways to heal and move on to healthier futures." In Northern Quebec, Makivik Corp., which represents Nunavik's Inuit, commended the TRC's report June 2.

But the birthright organization noted the TRC's work has also "opened the flood gate" on issues that have plagued Nunavimmiut residential school survivors for decades.

In a June 2 release, Makivik Corp. pointed to the region's high rate of suicides, school drop-outs, unemployment and violence.

"Health officials and the Inuit population have known for years the residential school era was much to blame for the social [disfunction,]" Makivik said.

Now is the time to go from "apology to action," Makivik president Jobie Tukkiapik said.

"Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued an apology to former residential school students in 2008, and now we have been given the whole story and a blue print to recovery," Tukkiapik said June 2.

"Let's do it."

That should take the form of new legislation around education, language protection, health and justice for Inuit communities, Makivik said.

[The TRC's Inuit sub-commission hosted hearings in communities in both Nunavut and Nunavik in 2011](#), where the commission took statements from hundreds of former residential school students.

It is estimated that between 3,000 and 4,000 Nunavummiut and about 350 Nunavimmiut were forced to attend residential schools.

Both NTI and Makivik were party to the lawsuit that resulted in the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

That meant that Inuit in both Nunavut and Nunavik who were forced to attend residential schools were included in the settlement's program, including the Common Experience Payment, Independent Assessment Process and the Personal Education Credit — although Inuit were found [to benefit less from those programs than their Aboriginal counterparts](#).

Other Canadian Inuit are still fighting for their own reconciliation.

In the Nunatsiavut region of Labrador, Inuit residential school survivors held "walks of reconciliation" June 2 to honour former students who were excluded from the federal settlement agreement due to a legal technicality.

Residential schools in Labrador were established before 1949, when Newfoundland and Labrador officially joined Canada as a province, which meant the prime minister omitted Labrador from his 2008 apology.

Approximately 1,000 Inuit residential school survivors who attended five schools in Newfoundland and Labrador have filed five separate class-action suits against the

government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Moravian Mission and the International Grenfell Association.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit_groups_urge_action_following_trc_report/

Wab Kinew: Aboriginal success is the best form of reconciliation

[Special to National Post](#) | June 3, 2015 12:24 PM ET



Wab Kinew drums during the Walk for Reconciliation, part of the closing events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on May 31, 2015 in Gatineau.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's closing event in Ottawa showed us glimpses of Canada at its best and at its worst. We were reminded of the dark moments in our history when Commissioner Murray Sinclair declared the residential school era to be part of a "cultural genocide" against indigenous people. Yet we were also reminded of our best, most welcoming nature when a round dance broke out in the lobby outside the event. Residential school survivors, their descendants and non-indigenous supporters danced hand in hand in a public expression of the very cultures that had been targeted for eradication. Most of the TRC's 94 calls to action can be boiled down to a similar ethos: Let's learn about aboriginal peoples and cultures so we can get on with the business of living together in a good way.

The damage of the residential school era was put into personal terms by former Northwest Territories Premier Stephen Kakfwi. Speaking during a ceremony Tuesday morning, Kakfwi stated "as a residential school survivor I didn't get to know my mother and father." He went on to say he spent this past Christmas with his 94-year-old mother for the first time since he was five, nearly 60 years ago. What a long journey for justice, healing and personal reconciliation it has been for survivors like Kakfwi.

The TRC's findings about experiences like Kakfwi's are crucial to Canada's future. This is not about being stuck in the past or cataloguing long ago injustices.

An attitude of cultural superiority made the residential school era possible. Echoes of it are still with us today in an education system that doesn't fully celebrate the contributions First Nations, Métis and Inuit people have made to our country. It lives on in a contemporary child-welfare system which, the report says, sees "aboriginal poverty as a symptom of neglect, rather than as a consequence of failed government policies." It persists in our public sphere with attitudes that would prefer to pathologize indigenous people rather than acknowledge the broader historical context.

These points may be difficult to hear, much less the term "cultural genocide." But confronting the truth always makes you stronger and shattering the myth of indigenous inferiority will make our country better.

Our country is already great. But how much greater will Canada be when every young person grows up learning that indigenous cultures are not something to be looked down upon, but rather sources of inspiration and innovation? How much richer will this nation be when every child grows up with a quality education and clean drinking water? How much stronger will the fabric of this country be when we realize that indigenous people are not a burden but rather an important part of what makes our place on earth unique?



Former N.W.T. premier Stephen Kakfwi, a residential school survivor, with his granddaughter Sadeya Kakfwi-Scott.

Not pursuing the TRC's recommendations is a fool's errand. It means another generation of indigenous children raised by the culture of poverty rather than the culture of their ancestors, wasted potential at a time that we need our economy to grow, and you can be sure there would be more uncertainty for the resource industry.

What can you do? Make the TRC's report "Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" your summer reading. Beyond that, learn about the indigenous cultures and history. It might not hurt to ask the federal politicians campaigning this fall how many of the TRC's recommendations they plan to implement. And to my young indigenous brothers and sisters, the best way you can honour the residential school survivors is to go out and make the most of the opportunities they never had. So long as you can do it in a way that is consistent with our cultures, your personal success is the best form of reconciliation.

An hour after telling his story, Kakfwi held his young granddaughter in his arms. Together they smiled and listened as the TRC commissioners, including Kakfwi's wife Marie Wilson, delivered their final report. The family bond that had been broken apart long ago had now been put back together.

Yet in working for that sort of personal reconciliation and demanding justice for themselves, Kakfwi and the other residential school survivors have also given all of us a chance to do better as a nation. The TRC has shown us some truths about ourselves, Canada at its best and at its worst. It's now up to us to choose together which path we would like to pursue.

National Post

Wab Kinew is associate vice-president of indigenous affairs at the University of Winnipeg and an honorary witness for the TRC.

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/wab-kinew-aboriginal-success-is-the-best-form-of-reconciliation>

Edmonton, soon to be largest Aboriginal population, embraces reconciliation aims

[National News](#) | June 3, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#)



(Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, centre, last September with Treaty 6 chiefs. Brandi Morin/APTN Photo)

Brandi Morin

APTN National News

EDMONTON – The choke cherry trees that were planted last year in front of every Anglican Church in the Edmonton diocese to commemorate healing and reconciliation are now blossoming.

It is a good sign, says Bishop Jane Alexander – perhaps symbolic of what’s to come.

Reconciliation in Alberta’s capital city, which will soon be home to the largest Aboriginal population in Canada, began when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission held a national event there in March 2014.

Alexander said her diocese is working to implement the apology the Anglican Church made to residential school survivors through various initiatives. They include providing education to clergy members, community outreach and welcoming cultural practices within the church.

Although things are happening, Alexander acknowledges that change will not come overnight.

Lewis Cardinal’s parents attended residential school. Cardinal lives in Edmonton and is the co-chair of the Alberta commissioner on human rights and justice, he never expected to see an apology from the government let alone a TRC during lifetime.

“So this comes as a pleasant step forward,” said Cardinal in light of the final TRC event held Tuesday.

“This is a new chapter. What we heard (Tuesday) is the foreword of that new chapter.”

Cardinal resounded TRC Commissioner Wilton Littlechild's statement that reconciliation is a process that will take generations to unfold.

"We're talking about generational work here – in the sense that we're not going to change everything in my lifetime. But what we're going to see is a softening and an acceptance of the Indigenous people in our cities," said Cardinal.

Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, an TRC honorary witness, was in Ottawa Monday and then flew home to be present at city hall council chambers where a live broadcast of the TRC final report streamed to a packed audience.

Following the release, Iveson said he is looking forward to his children being able to learn a more truthful story about the history of Indigenous people, including the injustices of residential schooling.

"Frankly, saying Ottawa has to fix this isn't enough," said Iveson. "The call has to come from all Canadians so that it is heard by all federal leaders, regardless of the party, so that we can develop a national consensus to take action to address particularly the resource gaps that exist in terms of funding to support the health and well-being, welfare and education of Indigenous people on reserve or in the cities where they reside. Those are treaty obligations."

Boyle Street Community Services cultural advisor Gary Moostoos is optimistic about reconciliation efforts within Edmonton.

"I've seen that there's a lot of attempts being made to build relationships with the Aboriginal people," said Moostoos, who pointed out that Iveson and council members have gone as far as participating in sweat lodges with area chiefs and consult with Indigenous elders.

Moostoos also works with residential school survivors and provided support to them in Ottawa this week. He said he's noticed a shift in their attitudes towards reconciliation.

"A lot of anger and frustration and fears have kind of dissipated and they're feeling safer to be who they are," he said.

He added Mayor Iveson takes his role of honorary witness seriously, which has a big impact on reconciliation for the city, and that Edmonton is setting a precedent for other municipalities.

“Other cities have made progress, however, with the leadership we have in place I think Edmonton is going to take lead in being the city that other cities can look up to and will be able to follow suit,” said Moostoos.

After declaring a year of reconciliation last year, Iveson announced three main priority areas the city would undertake:

- Educate city staff on the history and impact of residential schools
- Commit to higher Aboriginal youth participation in civic programs, fill gaps in city programming and allow youth to explore careers in the public service
- Create a public space in the city for Indigenous ceremonies and cultural practices

It’s difficult to measure the effects of initiatives such as educating staff, said Mike Chow, director of Aboriginal relations with the city.

“It’s not like mainstream society where you have a semester, a test and then you get a grade. One of the things that we’ve learned about our Indigenous cultures is that learning is lifelong. And it’s never ending,” said Chow.

The city is working with various partners and youth to give opportunities to provide leadership training and to become involved with reconciliation.

The Sacred Earth project is the first of its kind in Canada and will provide an area within Edmonton where Aboriginal people can practice cultural and ceremonial activities. The project is estimated to cost \$6 million and expected to be completed by 2017.

Chow said these are a taste of Edmonton’s more long-term “transformational” reconciliation actions to come. The city will review the final TRC reports and recommendations so that further steps can be taken.

“I’m really excited about the TRC reports because we were waiting for what the findings would do so we can catalyze with more action. I think with the release we’re going to be taking a look at that in more detail to make sure that our programs, services and activities going forward can align with it,” said Chow.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/06/03/edmonton-soon-largest-aboriginal-population-embraces-reconciliation-aims/>

Métis denounce exclusion from Truth and Reconciliation Commission process

By [Laura Beaulne-Stuebing](#) / [Canada Politics](#) – Wed, 3 Jun, 2015



P.E.I. Premier Robert Ghiz (L) shakes hands with Metis National Council president Clement Chartier.

The Métis National Council says the government of Canada and Truth and Reconciliation Commission process has treated Canada's Métis people as an afterthought, leaving them out of an opportunity for healing from the intergenerational effects of Canada's residential school system.

"For an Aboriginal people who have experienced decades of marginalization, many of whom attended Métis residential or boarding schools, this latest exclusion is inexcusable and demoralizing," said Métis Nation president Clément Chartier in a press release.

Although many children attended residential and boarding schools, Métis were not part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement, a multi-billion dollar agreement between the federal government, churches and survivors that resulted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This was likely because the schools most Métis children attended, while run by churches, were provincially funded and not funded by Ottawa. The federal government has been, to put it lightly, reluctant to take responsibility for Métis survivors.

Provincial governments were not part of the settlement, and according to those familiar with the process there were no mechanisms to get them to the table without another major lawsuit. Over the past several years the TRC Métis survivors have watched First Nations and Inuit survivors of residential schools receive counselling, compensation and support.

"Other than a few of the recommendations that include Métis in proposed actions, we are treated as an afterthought," Chartier said Tuesday.

“Little thought was given or advice provided to deal with the exclusion of Métis residential schools from federal settlements agreements.”

Chartier himself is a survivor of residential school, the Ile a la Crosse Métis boarding school, which he noted was one of the oldest such residential schools in Canada “where many of us suffered psychological, physical, cultural, emotional and yes, sexual abuse at the hands of the servants of the Catholic Church.”

“The Métis residential schools represent the most glaring moral and legal failure of the former Liberal government and the current Harper government to do justice in our time with Métis people,” Chartier added.

In previous years Métis have been invited to participate in TRC events but in the final national event in Edmonton last March, were not invited to speak. They also were not invited to participate in the final days of the TRC, from May 31 to June 3, in Ottawa.

Mitch Case, president of the Métis Nation of Ontario Youth Council, said survivors have continually been excluded from the TRC process.

“I think generally Métis youth are conflicted, filled with joy for our First Nations and Inuit relatives who are being recognized through the TRC process and yet deeply saddened that our community and our survivors are left out,” he told *Yahoo Canada News*.

“All of this begs the question to Canada, the provinces and the TRC,” he added, “do Métis experiences matter?”

According to the Métis National Council, there is somewhere between 350,000 – 400,000 Métis citizens in Canada, which amounts to about a quarter of all aboriginal peoples in the country.

Direct Link: <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/canada-politics/metis-excluded-from-trc-process-163017555.html>

Make reconciliation with Aboriginal Peoples a ‘high, urgent’ priority: Sinclair



Prime Minister Stephen Harper embraces elder Evelyn Commanda-Dewache, a residential school survivor, during the closing ceremony of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on Wednesday.

Hamilton Spectator

By [Kristy Kirkup](#), Jun 03, 2015

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Stephen Harper listened in silence Wednesday as the head of an exhaustive study of residential schools and their dark legacy urged all levels of government to make reconciliation and healing a top priority.

The results of that study demand a political response, said Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was established in 2007 to document the tragic history of residential schools in Canada.

"My fellow commissioners and I are convinced that for healing and reconciliation to happen in this country, such work must be done as a high — and, in some cases, urgent — priority," Sinclair said.

"And it must be done in partnership."

Harper and Sinclair were among a large gathering of politicians, commissioners, residential school survivors and members of the aboriginal community who gathered at Rideau Hall to formally close the commission's work.

Neither Harper, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt nor Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq spoke at the event.

"The nearly 7,000 people who shared and recorded their experiences and reflections with us have talked about the connections between their residential school experiences and many things that remain," Sinclair said.

"The rupture from home and family, and the inability to parent children and maintain the loving relationships, the mental, physical and spiritual abuses."

It's the commission's responsibility to share these stories, he continued.

"It has been our duty to learn all that we could about Canada's 130-year history of residential schools. It has been our challenge to share that history and legacy as widely as we could with all Canadians."

A summary of the commission's findings, which concluded that Canada's residential-school era constituted "cultural genocide," was released Tuesday along with 94 extensive recommendations that amounted to a comprehensive overhaul of the Crown's relationship with Aboriginal Peoples.

Since then, the daily question period has, unsurprisingly, been dominated by debate about the extent of the government's duty to act on those recommendations — one of which was to adopt the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"Canada is one of the only countries in the world where aboriginal and treaty rights are entrenched in our Constitution," said Mark Strahl, effectively the junior aboriginal affairs minister.

"We have endorsed the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples as an aspirational document, and a significant step forward in improving our relationship with Aboriginal Peoples."

And for a second straight day, the government refused to acknowledge the commission's use of the phrase "cultural genocide," despite prodding from the opposition.

New Democrat Leader Tom Mulcair said an NDP government would put a "filter" on its decisions to ensure they respect First Nations treaty rights and obligations, and embark on a "vast consultation" on aboriginal education.

The Conservative government proposed an ambitious aboriginal education initiative in 2014, but it foundered after some First Nations leaders complained about a lack of consultation.

Mulcair, speaking Wednesday of a "nation-to-nation" dialogue with Canada's aboriginal communities, admitted there would be logistical challenges in establishing such a relationship with some 600 First Nations.

"Mr. Harper likes to boast that the decisions he has to make are tough decisions. Well, this is a tough one, and it requires hard work, but it requires putting people around the same table."

It's unconscionable that aboriginal children "receive systematically 30 per cent less than other Canadian kids" for education, he added.

"So that's easy to fix. You can get to that but you can't impose it. It has to be the result of a vast consultation."

Mulcair repeated his promise to launch within 100 days of taking office a royal commission of inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women.

Direct Link: <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5660016-make-reconciliation-with-aboriginal-peoples-a-high-urgent-priority-sinclair/>

Stephen Harper must invite Pope to apologize for aboriginal abuse: Tim Harper

The Roman Catholic Church stands alone as the only church which has not apologized at its highest level



Inviting Pope Francis to Canada to apologize for abuse in the residential school system "would be the right thing to do" for the prime minister, says an Alberta archbishop.

By: [Tim Harper](#) National Affairs, Published on Thu Jun 04 2015

OTTAWA — Stephen Harper can only have one item at the top of his agenda when he visits the Vatican next week.

The prime minister must formally invite Pope Francis to travel to Canada to apologize for the role of the Catholic Church in this country's shameful residential schools era.

It is a demand of the commission and it has the backing of church leaders in this country.

Harper's position — that he will wait for the final report of the commission later this year before reacting — looks like a bid to move this off his plate until after a federal election.

But there is no need to wait on this request.

The Roman Catholic church has often appeared to be, first and foremost, consumed with protecting the Roman Catholic church and initially church leaders here seemed headed along that same path when [Justice Murray Sinclair called for an apology](#) from Pope Francis, on Canadian soil, within a year.

They equivocated, explaining it was up to the church in Canada, not the Pope, to deal with this, that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission didn't understand the decentralized nature of the church or the autonomous nature of the bishops, that the demand was "bold" and putting a deadline on such a gesture made it that much more difficult.

But in a later conversation, Archbishop Gerard Pettipas, who chairs the committee of Catholic entities that ran residential schools, was much more conciliatory.

It would be "very appropriate" for Harper to issue the invitation Pettipas, archbishop of Grouard-McLennan in Grand Prairie, Alta., told me. A papal visit requires a government invitation.

"It would be totally in place for Stephen Harper to invite the Holy Father to come to Canada and I wouldn't be at all surprised if that would happen," he said. "It would be the right thing to do."

High-ranking Catholic officials in Canada have apologized to residential school survivors as far back as 1991 and have repeated regrets at various levels over the years.

But a series of statements by high-ranking officials have left a "patchwork" [of apologies](#) or statements of regret that few survivors or church members may know exist, said Sinclair in his report.

"Roman Catholics in Canada and across the globe look to the Pope as their spiritual and moral leader," he writes. "Therefore it has been disappointing to survivors that the Pope has not yet made a clear and emphatic public apology in Canada for the abuses perpetrated in Catholic-run residential schools across this country."

The United, Anglican and Presbyterian churches have apologized through moderators or primates who spoke for the highest level of the church.

The Papal apology was not raised during [a meeting between Sinclair and Harper](#) Tuesday, but only because Sinclair was unaware of Harper's travel plans.

Harper's office will not discuss the meeting between the prime minister and the pontiff.

Pettipas accompanied former Assembly of First Nations grand chief, Phil Fontaine, to a private audience with Pope Benedict in 2009 when the pontiff offered his "sorrow" at the anguish caused to aboriginal children in Canada, including Fontaine.

Benedict offered his “sympathy and prayerful solidarity.” He did not apologize.

Fontaine, at the time, said the absence of the word “apology” did not diminish the moment and [Ottawa Archbishop Terrence Prendergast](#) told the Catholic Register he did believe Benedict’s statement to be an apology.

Prendergast sounded grudging in his acceptance of the “striking demand” made by Sinclair.

“I guess every Pope has to do it,” he said, then wondered whether the same demand will be made of the next pontiff and “what will be the next demand?”

There is already talk of Pope Francis visiting Canada in 2017, but Sinclair specifically called for a visit within a year.

The TRC has pointed to Benedict’s 2010 letter of apology issued for the church’s abuse of children in Ireland. In the letter, distributed through that country’s Catholic churches, the then-Pope said he was “was truly sorry” for the betrayal of trust and the violation of dignity.

But there is one difference. Benedict did not issue the apology in person, in Ireland.

Pettipas said he realizes the “mystique of the Holy See and the papacy” means we keep returning to the idea of the Pope travelling to express regrets.

Harper should do all he can to make it happen.

Even before the Pope apologizes, there is one more step for all the churches — ante up, as Sinclair demands, for permanent programs for healing and reconciliation projects and culture and language revitalization projects.

Tim Harper is a national affairs writer. His column appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday. tharper@thestar.ca Twitter: @nutgraf1

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/06/04/stephen-harper-must-invite-pope-to-apologize-for-aboriginal-abuse-tim-harper.html>

First Nations ‘day scholars’ can launch class-action lawsuit: court

VANCOUVER — The Canadian Press

Published Wednesday, Jun. 03, 2015 7:24PM EDT

Last updated Wednesday, Jun. 03, 2015 7:29PM EDT

Hundreds of First Nations' people left out of residential-school compensation will be allowed to collectively sue the federal government for their treatment.

Federal Court in Vancouver has certified a class-action lawsuit proposed by the so-called "day scholars," who returned to their homes at night.

The decision comes a day after a report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission branded the residential school survivors' collective ordeal "cultural genocide."

The legal action was launched by two British Columbia aboriginal bands, from which at least 300 survivors have so far been identified.

Chief Shane Gottfriedson of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc band says the decision is another step towards justice and reconciliation.

The two First Nations' bands say they're beginning preparations to notify class members and expect the outcome of any trial to be months or years away.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/first-nations-day-scholars-can-launch-class-action-lawsuit-court/article24789255/>

Quebec premier acknowledges cultural genocide of Canada's First Nations

The Canadian Press, June 4, 2015 4:17 pm



Quebec premier Philippe Couillard fields questions from reporters at the annual Council of the Federation meeting in Charlottetown on Thursday, August 28, 2014.

MONTREAL — Quebec's premier said he agrees with the assessment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that Canada's aboriginal peoples were victims of a cultural genocide.

Philippe Couillard said the residential schools regime could “certainly” be described as a cultural genocide of the First Nations.

Couillard shared the view of the commission, which this week described cultural genocide as the destruction of structures and practices that allow the country’s aboriginals to continue as a group.

While refusing to criticize the attitude of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who has avoided using the two words, Couillard said he is hoping for greater awareness in Canada about the aboriginal question.

Couillard also said in Quebec City on Thursday that he would like the history of First Nations and their contribution to the building of Canada to be taught in Quebec schools.

The commission’s report made 94 broad recommendations — everything from greater police independence and reducing the number of aboriginal children in foster care to restrictions on the use of conditional and mandatory minimum sentences.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2036830/quebec-premier-acknowledges-cultural-genocide-of-canadas-first-nations/>

Métis excluded from closing ceremony of TRC

Métis leaders absent from closing ceremony of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

[CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 03, 2015 5:28 PM CT Last Updated: Jun 04, 2015 10:17 AM CT



David Chartrand, president of the Manitoba Métis Federation. (Sean Kilpatrick/Canadian Press)

The leader of the Manitoba Métis Federation says he can't understand why his people weren't invited to the closing ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Leaders from the Assembly of First Nations, Native Women's Association of Canada and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami all participated in the final national event, which took place in Ottawa. But Métis leaders were absent.

Manitoba Métis president David Chartrand said he was often physically abused while he was a student at a church-run school.

"They used to whip us on the wrists every time we spoke the Saulteaux language," Chartrand said.

Other times, he said the nuns would force Métis children to stand on their toes for long periods of time.

"As soon as you got tired, they would whip you in the back of your calves."

Despite the abuse he and many other Métis people suffered, they weren't included in the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and the subsequent government apology, nor did they receive financial compensation.

Chartrand thinks it's because most Métis attended "day schools" that weren't recognized by the federal government during the settlement process. He thinks Métis people probably make up less than five per cent of people who attended schools that are in the settlement agreement.

Still, the Métis National Council (MNC) — which represents the Métis nation across Canada and internationally — issued a press release calling exclusion from the final ceremony "inexcusable and demoralizing."

For 10 years, MNC president Clement Chartier attended the Ile a la Crosse Métis boarding school in northern Saskatchewan run by the Roman Catholic church. Chartier said many of his fellow students were subjected to physical, mental and sexual abuse from staff.

Chartrand said work is underway to launch a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Métis students of residential and day schools. Because of the high costs of such a suit, he isn't sure how soon it could happen.

"We talk about turning the page, that's the slogan people are using, well the Métis have not yet even opened the book," Chartrand said.

No one from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was available to comment on why Métis people weren't included in the closing ceremony, which wraps up Wednesday in Ottawa.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/m%C3%A9tis-excluded-from-closing-ceremony-of-trc-1.3099435>

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Native American Tribe in Wisconsin Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage

The Oneida Tribe, one of the original members of the Iroquois Confederacy, has legalized same-sex marriage, changing their [definition of marriage](#) from “husband and wife” to simply “spouses,” Green Bay Press Gazette reports.

The vote amongst the Oneida Business Committee, the governing body that makes decisions like this, was unanimous.

But the issue of same-sex marriage remains complex among [the sovereign tribes](#). Many with longstanding traditions of two-spirited people, a role that varies in definition across different tribes but can encompass gay, bisexual, and transgender people, find their indigenous culture in conflict with Christianity.

After the colonists arrived and conflict ensued, many [Native Americans were converted, often forcibly, to the Christian faith](#). To this day, the majority of Native Americans are Christian, though many practice a syncretism of Christianity and Native beliefs while others attempt to return to the old ways.

What we know about gender roles, gender equality, and attitudes toward sexuality among the tribes varies greatly, comes in fragments, and is often misrepresented as dueling ideologies seek to claim old Native American customs as validation for their world views.

The facts, however, tell us that Native American views on sexuality have been heavily influenced by the imposition of Christianity, and while again, indigenous peoples and the various tribes ought not to be seen as a monoculture, we do know that gender roles must have been very different before European colonialism.

LGBT activists living on reservations have used the old tribal ways as support for their advocacy. Many LGBT Natives are reclaiming the name “two-spirit.”

The future of LGBT Natives remains unsure. But this news from the Oneida surely comes as a good sign.

Read more: <http://bluenationreview.com/native-american-tribe-in-wisconsin-legalizes-same-sex-marriage/#ixzz3bpTGrLOb>

Native Americans in Minneapolis Nearly Nine Times More Likely Than Whites to be Arrested

[Simon Moya-Smith](#)

5/28/15

Native Americans and African Americans in Minneapolis, Minnesota are nearly nine times more likely to be arrested for minor crimes than white people, according to a new report.

The American Civil Liberties Union's Criminal Law Reform Project and the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota (ACLU) released an analysis titled, "[The Picking up the Pieces: Policing in America, a Minneapolis Case Study](#)," and found that Native Americans were 8.6 times more likely than white people to be arrested for minor crimes. African Americans were just a decimal point higher at 8.7 times more likely.

PICKING UP THE PIECES



Looks at Minneapolis police data from
JANUARY 2012 – SEPTEMBER 2014



Analyzes **ONLY** low-level arrests



Black people **8.7 TIMES MORE LIKELY** than whites
Native Americans **8.6 TIMES MORE LIKELY** than
whites to be arrested for low-level arrests

aclu.org

The ACLU reviewed 96,000 arrests made by Minneapolis police officers for low-level offenses from January 2012 through September 2014, the [Star Tribune](#) reported. Low-level crimes are punishable by up to \$3,000 in fines or less than a year in jail.

Meanwhile, the Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ) found that, nationwide, [Native Americans are statistically more likely to be killed by police](#) followed by African Americans, Latinos, Whites and Asians.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/28/native-americans-minneapolis-nearly-nine-times-more-likely-whites-be-arrested-160525>

Man Accused of Hurling Beer, Racial Slurs at Native American Kids Will Not Face Jail Time, Judge Says

[Simon Moya-Smith](#)

5/30/15

The man who is suspected of hurling beer and racial slurs at a group of Native American kids at a hockey game in Rapid City, South Dakota in January will not face jail time, a judge said Thursday.

Trace O'Connell, 41, of Philip, South Dakota is accused of pouring beer on a group of Native American students during a Rapid City Rush hockey game at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. He is also accused of telling the kids to "go back to the reservation."

After a lengthy investigation by Rapid City Police, O'Connell was eventually charged with disorderly conduct, and would have faced up to 30 days in jail if convicted. But on Thursday, Fourth Circuit Magistrate Judge Eric Strawn removed the possibility of any jail time.

"I will not consider actual internment, but a fine," Strawn told Rapid City Attorney Joel Landeen and O'Connell's defense attorney Mike Butler, the Associated Press reported. Strawn said he based his decision on a review of the case as well as O'Connell's lack of a criminal history.

Landeen said he was disappointed by Strawn's decision. "I was prepared to seat a jury and go forward," he told the Associated Press.

In February, family members of the victims were enraged when they were told O'Connell would not face charges of child abuse or assault.

Native Americans in Rapid City and nearby Pine Ridge reservation have said the incident is indicative of the climate of racism against Native Americans that is deeply rooted in the city's white inhabitants. Native American families have said they fear allowing their children to travel to Rapid City.

O'Connell has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/30/man-who-hurled-beer-racial-slurs-native-american-kids-will-not-face-jail-time-judge-says>

Jail time over eagle feathers? One Native American's religious freedom fight



Bald eagle feathers. Credit: Leo Reynolds via Flickr (CC BY-NA-SA 2.0).

By [Matt Hadro](#)

Washington D.C., May 29, 2015 / 03:03 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- A Native American tribe leader has been threatened with time in prison for his religious use of eagle feathers, and his case is currently before federal court.

“This is a particularly egregious case where the federal government sent an undercover agent into a core religious ceremony, confiscated religious property, and criminally prosecuted people simply for practicing their religion,” stated Luke Goodrich, deputy general counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, representing the leader Pastor Soto.

Pastor Soto is a religious leader in Texas’ Liban Apache tribe, recognized as a Native American tribe at the state level but not the federal level. He uses eagle feathers in religious rituals, but eagles are protected by federal law and the religious group is not recognized at the federal level.

Undercover federal agents invaded his ceremony in 2006, confiscated the feathers, and threatened him with up to 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The operation was “violating the circle which we consider sacred,” Pastor Soto said in a video circulated by the Becket Fund. “I think if I remember anything of that day was the children running around, and some were crying and some were trying to hide.”

“It was violating everything we were as native people,” he said.

Eagles are protected by federal law and thus their feathers generally cannot be used or sold. However, many Native Americans give religious and cultural significance to eagles and “federally recognized” tribes can apply for a permit to use feathers that are stored in the National Eagle Repository for religious purposes.

Official Native American tribes can apply to use as many feathers as they want, Goodrich said. The burden to become officially recognized is a “byzantine application process” where a tribe must prove that it has sustained its communal and cultural identity throughout the years.

This is hard to do when the U.S. government had quelled various native practices in the past through “forced assimilation,” Goodrich explained.

“Nobody doubts that this is a real tribe,” he added. The Liban Apaches have made treaties in the past with Mexico and the Republic of Texas, he said.

Pastor Soto recently won his case at the Fifth Circuit Court level and got the feathers back. The Department of Justice wants the case dismissed, but Becket Fund says it isn’t over as once Pastor Soto dies the feathers will go back to the federal government instead of staying within his family and the tribe.

They want the religious exception for use of eagle feathers to apply not just to officially-recognized Native American tribes.

On Wednesday, a federal district court judge ruled against both parties. No one in the tribe but Pastor Soto can use the feathers, but the case is still open regarding the wildlife law’s application to Native American tribes.

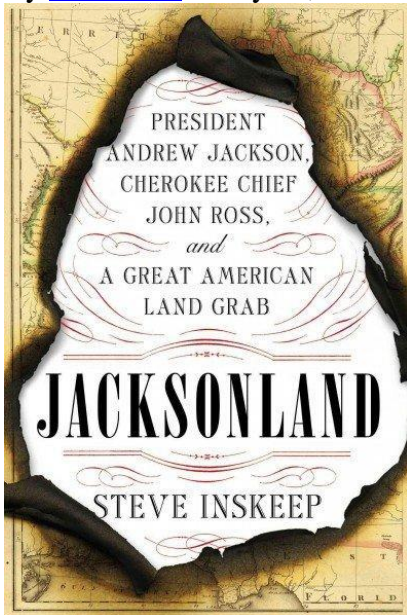
The Becket Fund will file an injunction for summary judgment in the case, where the judge could rule in their favor without a trial by the end of 2015. If this movement is refused then the case will move to a trial in 2016.

The case is very important for religious liberty of all Americans, not just Native Americans, the Becket Fund argued. If the federal government can raid a religious ceremony and confiscate materials considered sacred by the aggrieved party, what can’t it do, asked Goodrich.

Direct Link: <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/jail-time-over-eagle-feathers-one-native-americans-religious-freedom-fight-17402/>

President Jackson, Native American Displacement Focus of New Book by NPR's Steve Inskeep

By [Chris Bolt](#) • May 29, 2015



NPR Morning Edition Host and Journalist Steve Inskeep has just finished his book about President Andrew Jackson and the displacement of Native Americans in the time period.

How much can we learn about our current democracy from looking back at key events and time periods in US history? That's what [NPR's Morning Edition Host Steve Inskeep](#) sought to do when he began reading documents, letters and studying 1820s America. What he found was a story that fascinated him about [Andrew Jackson](#) and the conflicts over land between the US and Native Americans, particularly the Cherokee.

NPR's Steve Inskeep offers insights he found about Pres. Jackson, his toughness and contradictions, Cherokee displacement, thoughts about the nation and government at the time, as well as perspectives about contemporary issues from his book "Jacksonland"

In his new book "[Jacksonland, Cherokee Chief John Ross and a Great American Land Grab,](#)" Inskeep calls Jackson, an "awful and great and vital and troubling figure." He writes about the very tough man, who walked around with two bullets in him much of his life: one from a duel in which he killed a man; the other in his shoulder from a gunfight in a Nashville hotel. Jackson was a prolific writer and Inskeep says both his personal and political thoughts are chronicled in thousands of letters. While Jackson, the nation's 7th President, helped shape America's fledgling democracy, he also led numerous bloody battles against Native Americans at a time when conflicts over land were pushing Indian tribes west.



WAER listeners will recognize Steve Inskip's name and voice from Morning Edition. He's now an author of a historical work, *Jacksonland*

The incongruence and violence of policies toward Native Americans fascinated Inskip. He found that maps of the time showed 5 different tribes had legal, recognized ownership over lands that were, at the same time, part of states. He also discovered that not everyone supported the displacement of the tribes. In fact, he suggests even some soldiers that fought in those battles considered what they did was wrong.

The book consumed a good deal of his free time over two years as he researched and wrote. Inskip adds he took trips into the Southern states about which he was writing to see first-hand the places, while also talking to people in the South.

Direct Link: <http://waer.org/post/president-jackson-native-american-displacement-focus-new-book-nprs-steve-inskeep>

'Fraud': Conservative Blogger Claims She is Oglala, But Oglala Nation Says She is Not

[Simon Moya-Smith](#)

5/29/15

Conservative blogger Ellie Reynolds claims to be Oglala Lakota. She has appeared several times on *Fox News Insider*, leaning on her alleged heritage to speak in favor of Native American mascots.

But on Thursday, the Oglala Lakota government in Pine Ridge, South Dakota rejected her claim that she is a citizen of their nation.

Kevin Steele, a spokesman for the Oglala Lakota, told *ICTMN* that their enrollment office had investigated Reynold's claim and said she is not on record as having any lineage to their people.

"I believe it's a fraud," Steele said about Reynolds. He said she cannot claim to be Oglala Lakota because "she has to be enrolled" in order to do so.

Reynolds, who refers to herself on [Twitter](#) as a "Native American advocate" is, by profession, a tracker for the Republican Party in Colorado, State House Representative Joe Salazar told *ICTMN*.

Salazar said Reynolds is paid by the GOP to follow him and other Democrats in the state and to record their comments at committees and town hall meetings.

On her [website](#), Reynolds claims she is "an Oglala Sioux Native American" whose passion is about "giving a voice to Native American conservatives."

In March, Reynolds was present at the Colorado State Capitol to hear Salazar's anti-Native American mascot legislation. The bill would have regulated the use of Indian mascots at schools throughout the state. She had told Salazar she would testify against the bill, but remained silent throughout the hearing. The Indian mascot bill passed the House, but later died in the Senate.

For the record, Steele said, the Oglala Lakota have always been opposed to the name of the Washington football team as well as any and all Native American mascots.

Reynolds did not respond to *ICTMN*'s request for comment.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/29/fraud-conservative-blogger-claims-she-oglara-oglara-nation-says-she-not-160545>

Southwest Colombia indigenous clash with police over land claims



May 30, 2015

Indigenous groups from the southwest of Colombia have been clashing with police over the past few weeks after months-long protests over land failed to produce agreements with the national government.

The Colombian indigenous group Nasa, of which some 160,000 call the Cauca province in western Colombia their home, have occupied several properties in the municipality of Corinto in northern Cauca since December of last year, claiming they constitute part of their ancestral homeland and thus have a right to use them.

The group continues to occupy the land in the face of massive operations by the National Police to dislodge the indigenous community.

Witness accounts indicate that tanks, helicopters and riot police have descended on the rural municipality to uproot what has been described by government officials as an illegal occupation of private property by the Nasa people.

The group has been growing sugar cane on the land as a means of helping a “community in growth that doesn’t receive answers or solutions from the national government,” as they see it.

The police have destroyed many of the Nasa crops in the area, as well as burned the sacred meeting place where Nasa leaders make decisions and discuss the future of the group.

Thus far, three police and two indigenous have been injured, but no one has been killed.

According to the National Police, the property belongs to Incauca, an agroindustrial company operating in Cauca that processes and commercializes sugar cane. The police have stated that they seek only to restore the property to its legal owner.

The police also claim that the Nasa have armed themselves with improvised explosives and use gas masks to resist attempts to dislodge them.

The Nasa, however, paint a different picture. They claim that the police attack them with gases and plant the explosives in their settlements, allowing them to allege that the indigenous have entrenched themselves with homemade bombs.

“Our motive is not to kill or wound, our motive is to resist,” the indigenous group claims.

This latest indigenous occupation is part of a broader plan of “liberation of mother earth” undertaken against private interests that own large swaths of land in Colombia.

“They are ancestral lands and we are demanding that the government hand them over to us. There are seven properties in Corinto, two properties in Santander de Quilichao, and another in Buenos Aires.” explained the Nasa leader, Feliciano Valencia.

Direct Link: <http://colombiareports.com/southwest-colombia-indigenous-clash-with-police-over-land-claims/>

Australia’s ‘Stolen Generations’ Not a Closed Chapter

By [Silvia Boarini](#)



An Aboriginal activist shouts slogans during a march in Brisbane, Australia, to stop the cycle of ‘stolen generations’ of Aboriginal children. Credit: Silvia Boarini/IPS

BRISBANE, May 30 2015 (IPS) - Every year since 1998, Australia has marked ‘National Sorry Day’ on May 26, a day to remember the tens of thousands of indigenous children who, between the 1890s and 1970s, were forcibly removed from their communities by government authorities and placed into the care of white families or institutions to be assimilated into settler society.

‘National Sorry Day’ was set up following publication in 1997 of the ‘Bringing Them Home’ [report](#), the result of the first national inquiry which collected testimonies of ‘stolen’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and criticised the racist policies that allowed their systematic separation from their families.

The report played a central role in highlighting the plight of the so-called ‘stolen generations’ but it took a further 11 years until the government formally apologised for this ‘blemished chapter’ in Australia’s history. Only in 2008 did then Labour Prime Minister Kevin Rudd take the unprecedented step.

“If you listen to someone from the older age group of stolen generations and the younger ones, the essence of what they say is the same. They never met mother, they never met grandma. They feel they don’t belong anywhere. How they feel inside is the same” - Auntie Hazel, founding member of Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR)

“For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations (...) we say sorry,” he said on that occasion, before going on to envision a future in which “Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.”

Despite the apology, indigenous activists maintain that the ‘stolen generations’ is hardly an isolated chapter, let alone a closed one. “From the first few weeks of the invasion in the 1780s, they started removing our children and breaking down our families,” Sam Watson, a prominent Aboriginal leader and activist, told IPS. “And there are more children being removed now than ever before,” he added.

A recent [report](#) by the Government Productivity Commission, titled ‘Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage’, corroborates Watson’s interpretation. Indigenous children in out-of-home-care numbered 5,059 in June 2004 and 14,991 in June 2014. Barely five percent of the population under 17 is indigenous and yet, the report shows, 35 percent of all children removed are Aboriginal and Strait Islanders.

Mary Moore is founder of the Legislative Ethics Commission and has followed many cases of indigenous and non-indigenous child removal. She calls Australia the ‘child-stealing capital of the world’.

Many jobs depend on this ingrained practice and laws are passed to legitimise it, she says. “Removal and adoption are counter-intuitive strategies,” she told IPS. “They ignore the damaging lifelong consequences on children and they are far more costly than supporting families to remain united.”

Authorities justify removals in the name of ‘child protection’ and point to a context of ‘neglect’ and possible ‘risk’ as justifying factors. But the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander minority, overly represented at the bottom of most socio-economic indices, wants to know whose ‘neglect’ and racist policies have contributed to the widespread poverty, soaring incarceration numbers or high mental illness rates affecting their communities.

Although federal government talks of “closing the gap in indigenous disadvantage”, critics say that, often enough, in order to end ongoing state of neglect of Aboriginal communities, the only gap to bridge is between government’s promises and its actions.

In February 2015, at a speech marking the anniversary of the 2008 national apology, former Prime Minister Rudd, while not ignoring the staggering 400 percent increase in removal of indigenous children since 1998, called the crisis a “new type of stolen generation” rather than an unresolved and continuing crisis.

For Auntie Hazel, a founding member of the grassroots pressure group Grandmothers Against Removals ([GMAR](#)), there is no difference between what happened then and what happens now. “If you listen to someone from the older age group of stolen generations and the younger ones, the essence of what they say is the same,” she told IPS.

“They never met mother, they never met grandma. They feel they don’t belong anywhere. How they feel inside is the same,” she said.

GMAR was founded in New South Wales (NSW) in January 2014. NSW has the worst track record in child removals explains Auntie Hazel and GMAR was a way to say “enough is enough”. Just a year later, it had grown into a nationwide movement made up of self-organising charters throughout Australia’s affected communities.

The National Aboriginal Strategic Alliance to Bring the Children Home (NASA) now brings together GMAR and other like-minded groups. Protests, round-tables, marches and sit-ins have taken place across Australia and an international solidarity network is growing rapidly.

“We are all one and fighting for the same thing,” said Auntie Hazel. “It’s only when the little ones can nurture their spirit inside that they can become proud Aboriginal people.”

Ultimately, GMAR seeks *to achieve* self-determination in the care and protection of indigenous children and end the “power and control” that governments hold over the indigenous minority.

At the moment, many in the community complain, children are taken away with worrying ease, sometimes on the basis of unfounded and unchecked hearsay.

Anyone, Auntie Hazel explained, can call a hotline anonymously and say things about you. “Then maybe one day your child spends the lunch money on sweets so the teacher, a mandatory reporter, tells the Department of Community and Social Services (DOCS) that the child had no money for food. And so on until there is a case against you and you just don’t know.”

One of GMAR’s proposals to end this cycle is the establishment of an ‘Aboriginal expert committee’. Made up of health specialists, the committee will work with families deemed “at risk” by the DOCS before the children are removed.

Such a committee would have spared Albert Hartnett, one of GMAR's male members, much anguish. In 2012 his 18-month-old daughter Stella was removed without warning. "DOCS officials escorted by police officers knocked on my door one Friday morning," he recalls, still emotionally shaken.

"They said the child was at risk. They asked me 'where is the dog?' but I couldn't understand what they were talking about. We had no dog." Although DOCS did not find any of the "risks" mentioned in their documents, such as dog excrement on the floor, they still took the child.

Friday removals are a practice being fought by GMAR because it puts DOCS at an advantage by leaving families without support for a whole weekend. "They tell you 'you are an unsuitable parent' and it is easy to fall into a downward spiral," Hartnett said.

With no faith in the system, Hartnett attended the consultations the following Monday and in the evening received a surprise phone call from DOCS asking to assess his home. "It happened backwards," the father of five told IPS. "First they took the child and then they came to assess." The child was restored to the family but everyone, said Hartnett, has remained scarred by the experience.

"After the [2008] apology," Auntie Hazel told IPS, "our community felt disempowered. We were suffering in silence."

The truth was out about removals and instead "government stigmatised us," Hartnett told IPS, referring to the 2007 [Northern Territory Intervention](#) when, citing unfounded allegations of child abuse, federal government seized control of a number of indigenous communities.

Olivia Nigro, a social justice campaigner and researcher for GMAR told IPS that in this context, what GMAR has achieved is mobilisation from within. "GMAR has galvanised families in affected communities. It has really generated the political confidence to talk about this issue and demand redress for the people."

Direct Link: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2015/05/australias-stolen-generations-not-a-closed-chapter/>

We should expand Etok's legacy of tireless work on behalf of others

Kelsey Campbell Haake
May 30, 2015



'Etok' Edwardsen on a snowmachine near Barrow during whaling season in 2011.
Courtesy Edwardsen family

Being only 24 years old, I was not able to witness Charles “Etok” Edwardsen in his prime, but that does not make this time of his any less real for me. I heard a lot of his stories, some from him, some from my Aaka (grandma), some from his biography, and some even from people as far south as Phoenix, where I currently reside. Etok was everywhere; sometimes even his family didn’t know where he was or what he was working on. His endless energy brought him from Greenland to Washington, D.C.

The Native American communities, and more pointedly, those of Alaska are very tightknit, and it is not uncommon for people to ask who I was, where I came from, and who I am related to. I’d politely tell them I was born in Barrow, Alaska and that my Aaka was an Edwardsen. More times than I can count I was asked if I knew Etok Edwardsen, and I would reply acknowledging he was my Attata (Great Uncle). On too many occasions they would say, “You should be proud,” or, “He is a brilliant man. You come from a smart family,” or even ask me, “Have you heard this story about Etok when ...” It surprised me that his legacy and impact were known far and wide.

His accomplishments are a laundry list of things, ranging from the 1961 “Duck-In,” when Barrow residents protested federal restrictions on subsistence hunting, to being one of the most prominent and influential leaders of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act -- of course, none of these game-changing achievements were enough for him. Etok was never known to rest on his laurels or past adventures. His driving force was the fight for what was right, not only the Inupiat, but for indigenous peoples across the country and around the world.

While I address this to everyone, it is we, as an indigenous people, who cannot let his stories fade into the history books or newspaper articles. Etok never would have wanted that. He did not spend those many sleepless nights in Washington, D.C. to receive recognition or awards. He did not lobby for years to be written about in the newspaper. He did not become an Inupiaq revolutionary to pad his resume -- as if he ever used one. He did all that because he knew he needed to better the lives of others. Etok’s expertise happened to stem from the political field and he knew this. Our skills as Alaska Natives may not fall within that same category, but we all have an expertise we can in turn offer to our people. Take his example and run with it, it is what our peoples need.

If he was here today, he and I would ask that this legacy not die with him. It needs to continue to live, grow and prosper. Even though his life has ended, everything he stood for cannot end. We still need to improve the lives of those with less, improving health care, jobs, education, and most importantly creating opportunities wherever they may be needed. We cannot rest on his successes -- we have to create our own. Etok would want to be remembered by developing the lives of our indigenous people. For me that will be here in Phoenix with the creation of an indigenous-based financial literacy program with the various tribes in the Southwest. We all have a duty to each other, as did Etok. Luckily for us, Etok fulfilled his duty to us. Carry on Etok's legacy and never forget him. Take up Etok's mantle and take on making a difference.

Kelsey Campbell Haake was born in Barrow, Alaska. She is Charles Etok Edwardsen's eldest grand niece. She is currently a financial advisor in Phoenix, who volunteers teaching financial literacy classes to Native American youth in the southwestern U.S.

Direct Link: <http://www.adn.com/article/20150530/we-should-expand-etoks-legacy-tireless-work-behalf-others>

Rapid City Mayoral Race May Be Decided by Native Vote

[Brandon Ecoffey](#)

5/31/15

The upcoming mayoral election in Rapid City, South Dakota may likely come down to the Native American vote. Lately the hype around the potential impact of the Native vote has quickly been followed by the disappointment associated with our people's failure to show up at the polls, but this election may be different. Unlike past city elections the Native American population in Rapid City has vested interest in getting out and casting their vote.

The decision facing Native people in Rapid City goes far beyond usual politics. The city has become a racial hotbed fueled by more than 100 years of biased media reporting about Native people in the local news, poverty, an absent relationship with the city's law enforcement and the failure of the city's justice system to equally apply the law to all races.

Rapid City has witnessed beer being poured on Native children, large protests by Native people who feel that lethal force is being used against them unnecessarily by the police, and a boycott by the Oglala Sioux Tribe, who refused to spend any tribal dollars in the city. At the same time Penning County, where Rapid City is located, has been found to be in violation of federal law when handling child custody hearings involving Native American children. Up until a federal judge ruled it illegal, the state had been seizing Native children without allowing parents to view evidence against them or contest the

charges. The kids were then immersed in to the for-profit South Dakota foster care system.

Two men are running for mayor. One's platform contains the model way of incorporating minority populations into city government, while the other would have fit in with the Ferguson, Missouri police department.

Mayor Sam Kooiker is the former. He moved to Rapid City from Iowa and has embraced the Native community by taking a strong stance against racial discrimination, as well as discrimination against those suffering from physical and mental handicaps. During his time in office he has made a number of political gestures toward the Native community that have resulted in real public policy changes. These changes include the establishment of a polling place smack dab in the middle of the most densely populated Native American neighborhood in the city and the creation of a civil rights commission that has the legal authority to enforce the city's antidiscrimination laws. Kooiker has also consistently tapped Native people to fill empty seats on city boards.

Conversely, Steve Allender's reign as a city official is not so flattering, and the current divide between police and the Native community can be placed directly on his shoulders. During Allender's time as an administrator in the Rapid City Police Department the number of Native officers has declined to the low single digits despite serving a population that is nearly 30 percent Native. Allender has admittedly taken part in a police culture that has made a mockery of race issues, a culture that continues to exist despite his departure from the police force. According to former RCPD officer Glen Yellow Robe, Allender consistently took part in an environment within the RCPD that promoted bigotry and racism. Yellow Robe had recorded Allender making racist jokes while on the job but when Allender found out about the recording he erased it in a fit of rage. Shortly after the incident Yellow Robe was let go from the force. In statements made as part of a lawsuit against the RCPD, Allender is quoted as saying one of his favorite jokes is, "Black is beautiful, brown is grand, but white's the color of the big boss man." According to Yellow Robe, Allender regularly asked the Native officers if they were consuming canine for lunch—a jab at one of the most sacred ceremonies in Lakota culture.

It isn't a coincidence that these racial issues still exist within the RCPD as demonstrated by the highly offensive memes shared by Officer Anthony Meirose and others within the police department just days before Meirose shot and killed Anthony Locke in December of last year. In any other city in the world the consistent acceptance of racially insensitive behavior by an individual would have eliminated them as a credible candidate—but then again this is Rapid City.

The choice is very simple: Will Native Americans in the city reelect a man that has made real efforts to incorporate them into the decision-making process, or do we elect a man, who through his work while head of the Rapid City Police Department, has done just the opposite?

Brandon Ecoffey is an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and a lifelong resident of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He attended Dartmouth College and is an editor at Lakota Country Times.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/31/rapid-city-mayoral-race-may-be-decided-native-vote>

Bringing Music And A Message Of Hope To Native American Youth

May 31, 2015 5:46 PM ET



After years as punk rockers, Jeneda (right) and Clayson Benally formed the band Sihasin, which means "hope" in Navajo. "We have every possibility to make positive change," says Jeneda. Courtesy of Sihasin

Native American youth living on reservations can often face an overwhelming array of challenges, including poverty, addiction and abuse. Partly because of hurdles, high school dropout rates and suicides are [far higher](#) on reservations than the national average.

At a time when native teens are desperate for guidance, siblings from one Navajo family are mentoring them, helping them find their own way in traditional culture, contemporary music and — eventually — careers on and off the reservation.

Clayson, Jeneda and Klee Benally grew up on Black Mesa in northern Arizona, a place at the [center of a land dispute](#) between a coal mining company and the Navajo and Hopi tribes. The children of a traditional healer, they grew up protesting the coal mine and couldn't ignore what they saw as oppression and abuse of power. So they formed a punk rock group in the early '90s called [Blackfire](#).

"There was a lot of anger," Clayson recalls. Starting the band and performing was a way of "channeling that anger and frustration and putting it into something positive, as well."

Now, about two decades later, Klee Benally has become an activist, and Jeneda and Clayson have formed a new band called [Sihasin](#), which means "hope" in the Navajo language.

"With Sihasin, everything is kind of reversed, the energy," says Clayson. Unlike Blackfire's aim, he says, the goal with Sihasin is to "make people dance. Let's make people move and feel good, you know — not just smash stuff."

Parenthood made Jeneda stop and think about the message she wanted to send her kids. "I want my children to have hope," she says. "I see the world as a different place. And I recognize that we have every possibility to make positive change."

She and Clayson are bringing that hopeful message to schools all over Indian Country, where they teach Native American youth how to write their own songs. Jeneda says that she's helped teens in times of desperation find the right words in a song.



As Crystal Puhuyesva, 19, graduates from high school, she says family, friends and the Benallys have inspired her to fulfill her dream of becoming a nurse.

"Music is powerful," she says. "Music can absolutely save lives."

At Leupp High School, on the western edge of the Navajo reservation and about 45 miles northeast of Flagstaff, Ariz., only 9 of 19 seniors are graduating this year. The class asked the Benallys to speak and perform at graduation.

"You carry our hope, you carry our future within you," Jeneda told them during the speech. "I don't want you to feel burdened by that. I want you to feel empowered by that."

Crystal Puhuyesva, 19, heard the message. "I wish I had gotten this speech a long time ago," she says. She'd been held back and pulled in and out of schools on both the Navajo and Hopi reservations. But an uncle believed in her, and then she met the Benallys, who have inspired her to graduate and achieve her goals.

"With all their encouragement, their words, it just — it woke me up," says Puhuyesva. "I do want to pursue my dream of becoming a nurse."

The message that motivated her is essentially this: As Navajo and Hopi, you have a strong native foundation and culture. Embrace it. Then make it your own.

For the Benallys, that means blending the Navajo language — or the voice of their father, [Jones Benally](#), singing a traditional Navajo song — with an electric bass and modern drumbeat. Clayson says native people must take from what surrounds them in this contemporary world and join it with the past.

"For us to find a positive solution and to understand our own identity," he says, "it's this synthesis that has to occur."

Direct Link: <http://www.npr.org/2015/05/31/410983820/bringing-music-and-a-message-of-hope-to-native-american-youth>

Houska: Native American Hair is a Religious Right

[Tara Houska](#)

6/1/15

Graduation season. Lately my newsfeed has been a steady stream of smiling Native graduates, clad in beaded mortarboards, eagle feathers, and the beautiful adornments of their cultures. But with the season has also come a litany of stories involving students [fighting their schools and administrators](#) for the right to wear the sacred objects associated with a major life event.

Why are these schools denying Native Americans cultural expression? And those schools with say, '[R-word]' as a mascot...really? A [faux headdress is acceptable](#) but not a rightfully earned eagle feather?

Last week, I received a call from a family whose school had gone even further – the administrators were mandating that a Diné child cut his hair in compliance with the dress code, lest he be unable to attend next fall.

Despite several meetings and email exchanges, the school remained resolute that long hair is not a religious belief worthy of recognition. And even if it was, they asserted that the law does not protect the child's belief.

I could not believe what I was hearing. Were these administrators completely unaware of the significance of long hair to Native Americans? Had they heard of the [American Indian Religious Freedom Act](#), which sets forth a clear federal policy "to protect and preserve ... [the] inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian"? Did they just not care once informed?

Throughout Indian country, there are many differing hairstyles and associated beliefs. Personally, I learned my hair is an outward projection of my connection to the Red Road, a physical symbol representing my spiritual commitment to living *mino bimaadiziwin* and learning the teachings of the Midewiwin. Excepting slight trims, my hair will only be cut if a traumatic event occurs, such as the passing of a relative.

For the Diné family, their son's hair would be tightly wrapped into a figure-eight bun called a *tsiyyéél*. School administrators claimed the hairstyle would be a "distraction" for the other students and outside visitors. One wonders if a yarmulke worn by a Jewish child would be ruled a distraction.

But perhaps it is simply just another instance of mainstream culture having little to no clue about Native American values, and dismissing those values as foreign once informed. Fortunately, the Supreme Court does not take that approach.

On January 3, 2015, the Supreme Court unanimously found that a Muslim prisoner's religious beliefs tied to the wearing of a beard outweighed the prison's interest in authority, hygiene, concealment, etc. The [Holt v. Hobbs decision](#) relied upon the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which provides the same protections as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Just prior to the Supreme Court's ruling, the 11th Circuit had ruled against a Native American prisoner wishing to keep his hair long. In light of *Holt v. Hobbs*, the Supreme Court [vacated the 11th Circuit decision](#) and remanded the case.

These are not prisoners with significantly diminished rights, these are school children. School children who wish to exemplify traditional Native beliefs.

Although our customs may not be familiar, that does not mean they are not protected. And although not all Natives wear their hair traditionally, neither do all Jews wear yarmulkes. Religious beliefs are held by an individual.

Native Americans survived an era of "[kill the Indian, save the man](#)", a time when the federal government took our children, decimated our languages, cut our hair, and criminalized Native ceremonies. Hair cutting at the behest of an educational institution brings to mind cultural genocide.

America should be well-past the time when such practices continue. Sadly, we are not.

We continue to fight against [appropriation](#) of our culture, theft of our land, [children](#), and resources. We fight against poverty, against destruction of [sacred sites](#), for sovereignty, for [clean water](#), for the [very lives](#) of our people. We fight to [educate](#) the public about these issues, to seek understanding and revitalize the languages and cultures we have left. We should not have to fight for the hair on our heads.

Tara Houska (Couchiching First Nation) is a tribal rights attorney in the Washington, D.C. office of Hobbs, Straus, Dean & Walker LLP and a founding member of NotYourMascots.org. Follow her on Twitter [@zhaabowekwe](#).

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/06/01/houska-native-american-hair-religious-right-160564>

Native American graduate sues district, saying he was told not to wear eagle feather at event

Published June 02, 2015

[Associated Press](#)



In this April 11, 2015 photo, Christian Titman with the Titman family representing the Miwok people dances during the Grand Entry at the 24th Fresno State First Nations Powwow held at Fresno State's O'Neill Park in Fresno, Calif. Titman sued his California school district on Monday, June 1, 2015, over its refusal to let him wear an eagle feather during his high school graduation ceremony, claiming his rights to freedom of expression and religion in the state constitution are being violated. (Eric Paul Zamora/The Fresno Bee via AP) (The Associated Press)

SAN FRANCISCO – Attorneys for a Native American student who sued his California school district over its refusal to let him wear an eagle feather during his high school graduation ceremony, will ask a judge to order the school to allow him to wear the feather.

Christian Titman's lawyers are due in court Tuesday and are expected to argue the student's rights to freedom of expression and religion in the state constitution are being violated.

Titman, 18, a member of the Pit River Tribe, said he wants to attach the 5-inch feather he received from his father to the tassel on his cap at the Clovis High School ceremony set for Thursday.

He wants to mark his achievement and honor his Native American heritage, according to the lawsuit filed in state court in Fresno County on Monday. The tribe considers eagle feathers sacred and symbolic of a significant accomplishment.

"The district's refusal to allow a small symbol of religious expression during the graduation ceremony is a misunderstanding of both the spirit and the letter of the law," said Novella Coleman, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, one of the groups representing Titman. "The implication that an eagle feather with religious significance is unacceptable or disruptive signals a deep disrespect from the district."

A call to the district was not immediately returned.

But in a letter to Titman's attorneys, Superintendent Janet Young said the district has a strict graduation dress code that was intended to show "respect for the formality of the graduation ceremony, unity of the graduating class, and also to avoid disruption of the graduation ceremonies that would likely occur if students were allowed to alter or add on to their graduation cap and gown."

The district has previously refused to allow stoles, leis, rosaries and necklaces on graduation caps and gowns, and its dress code is neutral to any religion, Young said. Titman could wear the eagle feather after the ceremony and take photos with the principal, she said.

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that under the U.S. Constitution, governments don't have to make exceptions to religiously neutral laws that are applied generally, but the issue has not been resolved by the California Supreme Court under the state's constitution, said Aaron Caplan, a constitutional law expert at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

The California Constitution guarantees free exercise and enjoyment of religion, but not if it would lead to actions that are "licentious" or inconsistent with peace or safety. That would seem to favor Titman's argument that he has a right to wear the eagle feather, Caplan said.

"I don't see any reason why displaying an eagle feather at graduation could be considered licentious or inconsistent with the peace or safety of the state," he said.

Titman is seeking a court order that would allow him to wear the feather as well as a declaration that the district cannot prohibit religious symbols or insignia at graduation. Titman's attorneys have asked for a hearing on Tuesday, two days before the graduation.

Direct Link: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/06/02/native-american-graduate-sues-district-saying-was-told-not-to-wear-eagle/>

Native American Artifacts Sold at Paris Auction Despite Opposition

The Hopi tribe and its supporters in U.S. object to the sale of the religious Katsina Friends artifacts

By

Nadya Masidlover

June 1, 2015 4:16 p.m. ET

PARIS—An auction of Native American artifacts went ahead Monday despite pleas from the Hopi tribe and its supporters in the U.S. to suspend the sale.

Six masks—crafted about a century ago using combinations of leather, wood, cotton and feathers—sold Monday for €40,500 (\$44,000), said Alain Leroy, owner of Estimations Ventes aux Enchères, or EVE, the Paris-based auction house that carried out the sale.

Pierre Ciric, a lawyer representing the Hopi tribe, described the auction as an outrage.

The sale marks a fresh blow to the Hopi tribe's yearslong legal battle to prevent similar religious artifacts from going on the market.

The Hopi tribe, a federally recognized tribe of more than 10,000 from northeastern Arizona, regards the masks—known as the Hopi Katsina Friends—as sacred objects that should be returned to the group. The tribe also objects to the public display of the masks.

The auction was the sixth public sale of Hopi objects carried out by EVE since 2013. Over the years, the tribe has filed [several unsuccessful lawsuits](#) aimed at thwarting the sales.

The Conseil des Ventes, which regulates auctions in France, rejected a request by the Hopi to block the sale, ruling the plaintiffs didn't have legal standing to sue. The agency also said there are no grounds under French law to prevent the sale of such objects.

Mr. Ciric said the Hopi plan to appeal the ruling. The tribe is also seeking to prevent another auction scheduled for June 10, he said.

Lawmakers and museums U.S. had rallied against the sale.

The Museum of Northern Arizona, the Heard Museum, the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian and the Denver Art Museum wrote a letter last week to President François Hollande saying the auction was causing “significant outrage, sadness and distress.”

“The sale of such objects violates various federal, state and tribal statutes that protect the United States’ cultural resources and tribal property,” the letter said.

Earlier in May, Arizona’s congressional delegation wrote to Attorney General Loretta Lynch and the Federal Bureau of Investigation director James Comey asking for “a response regarding potential options the federal government could take to address the Hopi Tribe’s concerns.”

A spokesman for the FBI said it “cannot enforce U.S. laws in France.”

The U.S. Justice Department didn’t respond to requests to comment.

Mr. Ciric, the Hopi tribe lawyer, insisted “the tools exist today” under French law to stop the sale. “The Conseil des Ventes is refusing to use them,” he said.

Mr. Leroy, the owner of the EVE auction house, has described himself as “the punching bag” of the Hopi tribe, saying that “religious extremists” were behind the lawsuits.

On Monday Mr. Leroy said “the justice system has said what it has to say: [the sale] is not unlawful.”

In 2013, supporters of Native American tribes, including the Annenberg Foundation, paid more than \$500,000 at one of the disputed auctions in Paris to buy century-old artifacts and return them to Hopi and Apache Indians.

[Conflict over the artifacts](#) has sparked debate in the French government. In May, the Conseil des Ventes addressed a report about the auctions to Justice Minister Christiane Taubira.

In the document, Conseil des Ventes Chairwoman Catherine Chadelat recommended creating categories of objects that would be subject to special rules.

In an interview, however, Ms. Chadelat said it would be tough to establish special rules to cover the masks, noting that religious objects from the Catholic Church are routinely sold at auctions in France despite objections from some Catholics.

“In a society such as ours, the standard is freedom, and bans are an exception,” said Ms. Chadelat.

A spokesman for the Justice Ministry said the government is considering a ban on “auctions concerning sensitive objects” and on how such a law might be extended to include the Hopi and Navajo masks.

Direct Link: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/native-american-artifacts-sold-at-paris-auction-despite-opposition-1433189811>

Deal reached to let Native American student wear eagle feather at high school graduation

Published June 03, 2015

FoxNews.com



April 11, 2015: Christian Titman with the Titman family representing the Miwok people dances during the Grand Entry at the 24th Fresno State First Nations Powwow held at Fresno State's O'Neill Park in Fresno, Calif. (Eric Paul Zamora/The Fresno Bee via AP)

A Native American high school student who sued his California school district over its refusal to let him wear an eagle feather to graduation will be able to don the item after all.

Rebecca Farmer, a spokeswoman for the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, told the Associated Press late Tuesday that attorneys for Christian Titman, 18, and officials with Clovis Unified School District reached an agreement Tuesday night allowing him to wear the feather. She did not provide any other details of the deal.

Earlier Tuesday, a judge suggested that the parties try to work out an agreement in lieu of ruling on the issue. Titman's lawyers had argued that the student's rights to freedom of expression and religion in the state constitution were being violated.

Titman, a member of the Pit River Tribe, said he wants to attach the 5-inch feather he received from his father to the tassel on his cap at the Clovis High School ceremony set for Thursday. Clovis is about 10 miles northeast of Fresno.

He wants to mark his achievement and honor his Native American heritage, according to the lawsuit filed in state court Monday. The tribe considers eagle feathers sacred and symbolic of a significant accomplishment.

"The district's refusal to allow a small symbol of religious expression during the graduation ceremony is a misunderstanding of both the spirit and the letter of the law," Novella Coleman, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, argued. "The implication that an eagle feather with religious significance is unacceptable or disruptive signals a deep disrespect from the district."

In a letter to Titman's attorneys, Superintendent Janet Young said the district has a strict graduation dress code intended to show "respect for the formality of the graduation ceremony, unity of the graduating class, and also to avoid disruption of the graduation ceremonies that would likely occur if students were allowed to alter or add on to their graduation cap and gown."

The district previously refused to allow stoles, leis, rosaries and necklaces on graduation caps and gowns, and its dress code is neutral to any religion, Young said. Titman could wear the eagle feather after the ceremony and take photos with the principal, she said.

The issue of whether Native American students can wear eagle feathers at graduation has come up in other school districts in the country. Last month, a federal judge in Tulsa, Oklahoma, ruled an American Indian student couldn't wear an eagle feather on her graduation cap.

U.S. District Court Chief Judge Gregory Frizzell said the school's policy of prohibiting all decorations on graduation caps did not violate the U.S. Constitution's right to exercise religion freely because it was religion-neutral and applied generally. The school also had a legitimate interest in maintaining the formality of the graduation ceremony and in demonstrating the unity of the graduating class, the judge said. He rejected the student's freedom of speech argument.

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that under the Constitution, governments don't have to make exceptions to religiously neutral laws that are applied generally, said Aaron Caplan, a constitutional law expert at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. But the issue has not been resolved by the California Supreme Court under the state's constitution, under which Titman is bringing his lawsuit, Caplan said.

The California Constitution guarantees free exercise and enjoyment of religion, but not if it would lead to actions that are "licentious" or inconsistent with peace or safety. That would seem to favor Titman's argument that he has a right to wear the eagle feather, Caplan said.

"I don't see any reason why displaying an eagle feather at graduation could be considered licentious or inconsistent with the peace or safety of the state," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Direct Link: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/06/03/native-american-student-seeks-court-order-to-halt-school-ban-on-eagle-feather/>

Navajo Band Teaches Native American Youth How To Write Their Own Songs, Overcome Obstacles

The Huffington Post | By [Joseph Erbentraut](#)

Posted: 06/02/2015 5:12 pm EDT Updated: 26 minutes ago



In the eyes of brother-and-sister duo [Sihasin](#), music is a powerful tool with the potential to transform lives -- or that's their hope, at least.

The Arizona band, comprised of Jeneda and Clayson Benally, plays an unusual brand of music that's difficult to classify: it incorporates electric bass and modern drums with sounds more typical of their background, growing up as the children of a traditional medicine man in the Navajo Nation. Their father, Jones Benally, sings on some of their songs, which also harken back to their punk roots from [their former band, Blackfire](#).

"We fuse our traditional songs into contemporary techniques," [Clayson explained to Indian County](#), a Native news website, earlier this year. "It's hard to describe. For us, it's a form of communication. Sihasin is Navajo for 'hope.' It's part of our philosophical foundation."

The duo played at and helped organize a [Native American showcase at the SXSW music festival](#) in Austin this year and, as reported by NPR, they have also [brought their music and message](#) to the youth of Indian County.

NPR reports the band teaches Native American youth how to write songs that help them express themselves, especially during difficult times. This is particularly meaningful as American Indian youth have disproportionately low graduation rates and are at high risk of suicide, according to [the Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute](#).

The band also recently spoke at a Navajo high school's graduation, telling the students, according to NPR, "You carry our hope, you carry our future within you. I don't want you to feel burdened by that. I want you to feel empowered by that."

In addition to offering a message of hope to American Indian youth, the band is also optimistic that their music is helping to break down the stereotypes of what Native American music is, and what it isn't.

"I think in terms of representing our Native American heritage, we have to utilize every single modern tool possible," [Jeneda told RYOT](#), a cause-based news website, this year. "It's not only about allowing people to see us telling our story, but it's also about cultural survival."

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/02/sihasin-native-american-music_n_7486756.html

Congress Approves Commission on Native American Children

By [Joaqlin Estus, KNBA - Anchorage](#) | June 3, 2015

The U.S. Congress on Tuesday unanimously adopted legislation to create a Commission on Native American children, according to a prepared statement by bill sponsor and Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski.

The 11-member commission will study and develop recommendations on ways to combine and coordinate federal programs and funding for Alaska Native, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian children.

The commission is named in honor of Dr. Walter Soboleff, a Tlingit elder from southeast Alaska who promoted cultural education, and a lower 48 tribal leader, Alyce Spotted Bear.

Murkowski said, "Walter Soboleff lived his life by a simple motto: 'Take care of the old person you are to become,' but that must begin as early as possible."

She says the aim is to more effectively address issues affecting Native children, such as poverty, abuse and domestic violence, and substance abuse.

Direct Link: <http://www.alaskapublic.org/2015/06/03/congress-approves-commission-on-native-american-children/>

Facebook Is Still Making It Difficult for Native Americans to Use Their Real Names

June 2, 2015

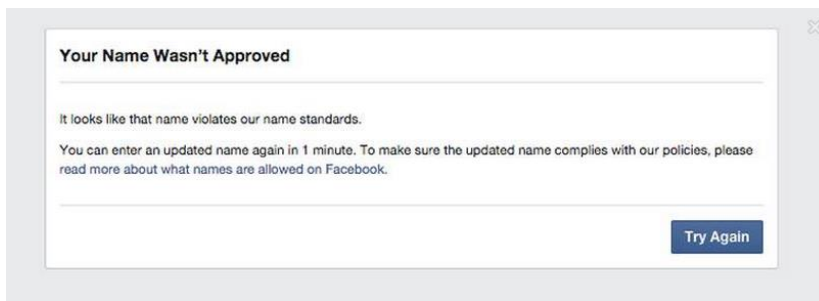
By [Allegra Ringo](#)

The [Facebook](#) "real name" problem came to light in October 2014, when Shane Creepingbear, a member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, [tweeted](#) that he had been kicked off Facebook (on Columbus Day, no less) for having a "fake name." This wasn't the first time this had happened to Creepingbear, who is, in fact, using his given name for his [Facebook](#) profile. It had happened twice before.

"The first time it happened, years ago, I didn't have to do much," Creepingbear told me. "The second time it happened I also didn't think much of it. I just sent them a picture of my state ID. The third time was when it really struck me."

He was in the middle of a Facebook chat, when suddenly it was cut off, and Creepingbear was prompted to "confirm [his] identity."

He started to go through the motions to confirm his identity, but stopped at one message that said "it looks like that name violates our name standards."



All screenshots courtesy of Tiffany Pathkiller and Shane Creepingbear

At that point, he became frustrated.

Creepingbear took screenshots of what he was experiencing, and posted the photos to Tumblr and Twitter, using hashtags like #racism and #erasure. Media outlets like [Colorlines](#) picked up on the story. Eventually, a friend with media connections put Creepingbear in direct touch with Facebook. Facebook corrected the problem for Creepingbear—but not for others. Many people are under the impression that the issue has been corrected because Facebook had technically addressed the issue back in February with a wishy-washy statement that said they had "[more work to do](#)." But as recently as this week, [Native American](#) users are still experiencing the same problem.

Activists for the [#MyNameIs coalition](#) traveled to Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, California yesterday, June 1, to protest. They carried signs that bore slogans like "Fake Name Reporting Punishes Identity, Not Behavior" and "Stop Badgering People for ID. My Name Is as Real as Yours." These activists included Native Americans and LGBT people, some of whom have been [affected by the "real name" policy](#) as well ([drag](#)

[performers](#), in particular, have reacted to the policy that requires them to use their legal names).

In a press release, Samuel White Swan-Perkins, one of the event's organizers, pointed out that Facebook was repeating history perhaps without knowing it: "Perhaps Facebook is not aware but an entire generation of Native children lost their cultural names after the [Dawes Act of 1887](#) was implemented... Whatever the name is, it's not for you to question. Natives deserve better treatment, as do our LGBTIQA and other allies."

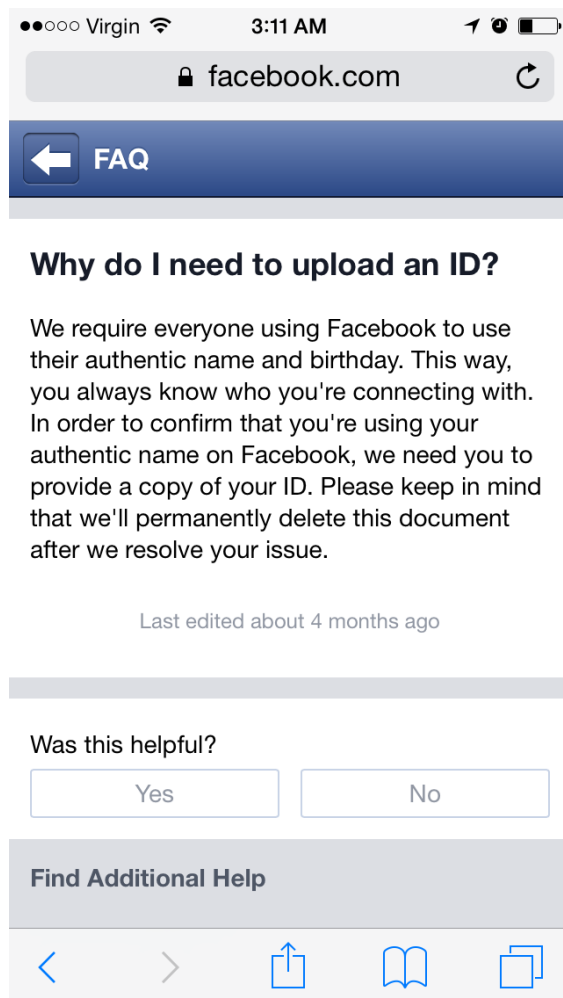


Photo by Gareth Gooch

Lil Miss Hot Mess, a drag queen and co-organizer of the #MyNameIsProtest, added: "This dangerous and discriminatory policy is yet another indication that Facebook is out of touch with the majority of its users, especially those who fall outside of the company's employee demographics are predominantly straight, white, and male. Whether you use Facebook or not, this fight is about the future of digital culture, including everyone's right to maintain privacy and express their truest selves."

I asked a Facebook spokesperson if they had done anything to address the problem since their "more work to do" statement. The spokesperson told me Facebook is "committed to ensuring that all members of the Facebook community can use the names that they use in real life. Having people use their authentic names makes them more accountable, and also helps [Facebook] root out accounts created for malicious purposes, like harassment, fraud, impersonation, and hate speech. Over the last several months, [Facebook has] made some significant improvements in the implementation of this standard, including enhancing the overall experience and expanding the options available for verifying an authentic name. [They] have more work to do, and [their] teams will continue to prioritize these improvements."

He also told me that "in reference to the expanded options, [option three](#) [in Facebook's list of accepted forms of ID] is new." Option three states: "If you don't have an ID that shows your authentic name as well as your photo or date of birth, you can provide two forms of ID from option two [which includes non-government issued ID like credit cards and pay stubs] above, and then provide a government ID that includes a date of birth or photo that matches the information on your profile. [Facebook will not] add the name or other information from the government ID to your account."



That doesn't solve the problem. Plus, as Creepingbear pointed out, "to 'confirm a name is real,' you have to turn over sensitive personal information (driver's license, etc.) to an organization that has a terrible history of privacy violations and poor information control."

Facebook has a set of [internal name guidelines](#) that, among other things, advise the user not to include "words, phrases, or nicknames in place of a middle name." This might be what's causing Facebook to recognize Native names as "not real." But if that's the case, that rule is obviously way too broad. As we've learned, some people have "phrases" in

their given names, and it's not a joke or an "account created for malicious purposes." It's just a non-white name.



Facebook keeps the details of its "real name" enforcement system closely guarded in an effort to prevent people from gaming the system. What we do know, though, is that Facebook administrators do not go searching for "fake" names. Instead, users report what they believe to be inappropriate names, and the Facebook team then determines the legitimacy of these reports. This means that multiple times, other users reported Creepingbear's name, and multiple times, Facebook agreed with them.

Creepingbear agrees with Samuel White Swan-Perkins that Facebook's policy "supports the narrative of the centuries-long occupation and erasure of native land and culture. Facebook continues to insist that [Native American] names do not meet their name 'standards.' These 'standards' are a direct reflection of what society as a whole deems 'normal.'"

Please Change Your Name

It looks like the name on your Facebook account may not be your authentic name. We ask everyone to use the name they go by in real life so friends know who they're connecting with.

[What names are allowed on Facebook?](#)

If this is the name you use in your everyday life, we would like to work with you to verify the name that best represents your identity. We accept [a number of documents](#) to allow you to verify your everyday name.

Get Started

Indeed, there have been scarce (if any) complaints about the policy from anyone who's not part of a marginalized community. The policy has come under fire before, most famously when it forced drag queens to use their "real names," as previously mentioned. Facebook agreed to work with drag queen activists in order to address the problem, and they appear to have fixed it—for a select group of people. The [drag queens in question](#) are no longer locked out of their accounts, nor is Creepingbear and a handful of other Native people who publicly brought the issue to light. But as far as anyone can tell, there have been no changes across the board that will prevent this from happening again.

Dana Lone Hill, a Native American activist, had at one point planned to bring a [class-action lawsuit against Facebook](#). However, Lone Hill was unavailable for comment, and I was unable to find any updates on the lawsuit after February of this year.

Facebook may not have malicious intent behind its "real name" policy, but the breadth of its scope, as well as the language used to enforce it, is exclusionary. They definitely have "more work to do," and that work is acknowledging that Native people—and their real names—exist.

Direct Link: <http://www.vice.com/read/facebook-is-still-making-it-difficult-for-native-americans-to-use-their-real-names-602>

Native Americans seek Oklahoma return of remains of sports legend Thorpe



By Heide Brandes 22 hours ago



By Heide Brandes

OKLAHOMA CITY (Reuters) - Native American in Oklahoma started a campaign on Wednesday for the return of the body of sports legend Jim Thorpe, whose remains are buried in a Pennsylvania hamlet named for the famed American Indian athlete and Olympic champion.

The Sac and Fox Nation, which lost a court case last year on the return of the remains, told a news conference they were taking their campaign to the U.S. Supreme Court and the public, arguing Thorpe's body should rest in his tribal lands after a sacred burial ceremony.

"For years we were disregarded, our graves were looted, and we are still fighting for the right of a man to decide how to be buried," said Sandra Massey, historical preservation director for the Sac and Fox Nation.

"He didn't want to be sold, which is what happened," she said of Thorpe, who died at age 64 in 1953.

One of the 20th century's greatest athletes, Thorpe won gold medals in the decathlon and pentathlon in the 1912 Summer Olympics in Stockholm, and later played professional baseball and football.

Following Thorpe's death, his third wife, Patricia Thorpe, arranged for his burial in what became the Borough of Jim Thorpe in Pennsylvania after learning the struggling towns of Mauch Chunk and East Mauch Chunk wanted to merge under a new name. Jim Thorpe was interred there in 1957.

Thorpe's two surviving sons, Richard and William Thorpe, have said that Patricia Thorpe, who is now dead, removed the remains in a hearse from a sacred ceremony in Oklahoma in 1953 so that she could offer them up to the highest bidder.

Jack Thorpe, one of Jim's sons, sued in 2010 to reclaim his father's remains. He died the next year and his brothers Richard and William became plaintiffs. Two grandsons, Mike Koehler and John Thorpe, wanted Jim Thorpe's remains left alone.

In April 2013, U.S. District Judge A. Richard Caputo in Scranton, Pennsylvania, found that the Borough of Jim Thorpe was a "museum" under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, a 1990 federal law meant to stop the plundering of burial grounds.

As such, it was required to return Thorpe's remains if a lineal descendant asked for them.

In October 2014, a federal appeals court said a lower court judge was wrong to order that Thorpe's remains be turned over to the Sac and Fox Nation.

Direct Link: <http://news.yahoo.com/native-americans-seek-oklahoma-return-remains-sports-legend-232138925--nfl.html>